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## **HIERARCHY**

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### **Brief prelude**

*Whoever says hierarchy says scales of human values; whoever says scales of human values, says scales of responsibility and duties; whoever says hierarchy says discipline. But above all, whoever says "hierarchy" actually takes a position of battle against everything that tends - in spirit or in life - to lower or destroy the necessary hierarchies. Necessary, we have said, and not only traditional. Tradition is certainly one of the greatest spiritual forces of peoples in that it is a successive and constant creation of their soul. But we cannot accept the absolute thesis that everything that is tradition is sacred and immutable and intangible:*

*therefore also traditional hierarchies. History offers us instead a panorama of hierarchies that are born, live, transform, decline, die. It is therefore a question of preserving the values of hierarchies that have not exhausted their task; it is a question of grafting new elements of life into the trunk of certain hierarchies; it is a question of preparing the advent of new hierarchies. This is how the link between the past and the future is sealed.*

*We do not intend to deny the past. We would deny ourselves. We are already past, by the mere fact that we live in the present, in comparison with those who will come; nor do we intend to close ourselves off from the paths of the future, since our present is, in itself, a future in comparison with those who have preceded us. All this not only from a point of view that could be called chronological. Faced with the words and concepts that are tied to it of right and left, of conservation and renewal, of tradition and progress, we do not cling desperately to the past, as to a supreme plank of salvation, nor do we throw ourselves headlong into the seductive mists of the future. Our philosophical and political position is that of a vigilant control, of a meditative discipline intended to determine a synthesis or state of equilibrium that will allow us to emerge from the stormy sea of the world crisis.*

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*Translated all this into more modest terms, “Hierarchy” aims to represent in the field of ideas an attempt to coordinate and illustrate all the movements of the contemporary spirit with particular attention to their repercussions in the field of national politics; it is part of the newspaper “The People of Italy”, but it proposes a cultural work of criticism and choice that is broader, more complex and much more delicate and profound than that which an ardent and combative daily newspaper like “The People of Italy” can carry out.*

*It is our desire to count among the collaborators of "Hierarchy" the most disinterested and fervent intelligences of Italy, outside of any narrow partisan prejudice.*

\* \* \*

*The first issue does not seem unworthy of our intentions.*

*And now, on the way.*

## **The Management**

### **The Cannes Drama**

#### **I**

Three formidable question marks hung over the conscience and life of Europe on the eve of the Cannes Conference: the German question mark; the Russian question mark; the question mark of South-Eastern Europe. In dependence on these and higher than all: the question mark of the general economic crisis denounced by a thousand phenomena, each more disturbing than the last; a crisis which in some nations tends to become chronic, to the point of authorizing pessimists to denounce the possibility of a catastrophe for the civilization of our continent. Given this anxiety of the peoples, due to the enormous nervous strain which has lasted since 1914 and to the miserable conditions of existence of tens of millions of individuals, the Cannes Conference opened amidst a vast movement of expectation. The period of skeptical and tired curiosity, with which people followed the peace conferences, from that of Versailles onwards, seemed to have passed: for the Cannes conference, many hopes seemed to be revived and reborn in the spirits: which made the disappointment more bitter and the epilogue of the Conference itself more dramatic. Which was dominated throughout, from the first to the last, by the manifestations of the Anglo-French conflict and by the

exhausting search for the necessary transactions to overcome it, at least until the next occasion.

## II

The disagreement arose immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. From a different evaluation of the intrinsic value of the Treaty and from an equally different evaluation of the ways to execute it, that is, to impose its observance on Germany. For England, not only was the Treaty not perfect, but it was not and could not be definitive. Above all, it could not be "absolute" as regards its execution. There are provisions in the Treaty that are particularly suited to wounding the average English mentality, exquisitely represented by Lloyd George. That clause 246, for example, which imposes on Germany to deliver to England within six months nothing less than the skull of Sultan Makaoua taken away by the Germans from their protectorate of East Africa, was it ever executed? Is there anyone who can give us news of this poor vagabond sultan skull? The entire Treaty of Versailles, with the exception of the fundamental clauses of a territorial and colonial nature, is repugnant to the average English political mentality. It considers it excessive, cumbersome, unworkable. The signatures, the very numerous signatures at the bottom of the "Monument" of Versailles had not yet dried and already England was working to gnaw at it and undermine it. The entire history of Franco-English diplomatic relations can be summed up in this proposition: on the one hand England which obstinately tends to revise the Treaty of Versailles, in its clauses and in its application, on the other France which would like to stiffen, to encapsulate itself ironically in the clauses of the Treaty, while then, under English political pressure and under European moral pressure, it is forced to give in and to concede continuously.

### III

In this necessity lies the tragedy of France. On the one hand, there is the obsession of a defeated Germany, but, for too many signs, not tamed. Barely thirty months have passed since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles - June 28, 1919 - and Germany has already overcome its social crisis. Its deep forces - technical bourgeoisie, Lutheranism, universities, "gewerschaften" or workers' unionism - have shattered all communist attempts. Left-wing "Puccism" now seems to have been liquidated: a living man, Paul Lewi, has dismantled it and from the grave, a dead man, Rosa Luxembourg, has condemned it. German Bolshevism has shattered into half a dozen rival congregations, one of which, however, stands out from the others for its program of extreme nationalism and revenge.

Right-wing "Puccism", after the Kappist attempt, is morally shaken. The republic is not, and cannot be, popular in Germany except among Jewish circles that have given the republican Reich a host of financiers and ambassadors - since republic and defeat are in the German mentality moments of the same historical "entwicklung" (the idea of development, Nietzsche says somewhere, is peculiar to the German spirit), but the republic is for the moment passively accepted as a kind of "substitute". It seems that a sort of watchword has gone around among the Germans: first let's get back on our feet economically and then we will solve the political problem. The Kaiser, meanwhile, with his reserve, does not gamble his reputation in ridicule as the reckless Karl has done on several occasions. From the industrial point of view, Germany is recovering on a large scale, as these data document. From January 1921 to October, 408 new industrial companies were formed in Germany with a capital of nearly two billion marks.

In The Times Trades Supplement of December 17, 1924, reported by Echoes and Comments, there is this summary of the German industrial situation:

"The orders for metals are in connection with the extensive orders secured by the railway material factories and by the industries of kitchen machines, typewriters, cotton-processing machines and the like.

"The orders for rolling stock come mainly from Holland, Argentina and Romania, which countries are granted payment in installments over three years.

"The Schwartzkopf workshops in Wildau have work assured through 1923 and the Busch workshops in Bautzen have to expand their facilities to meet orders.

"The famous Singer sewing machine firm is also erecting a large new factory in Wittenberg, which will cost over 100,000 dollars, and the Seidel typewriter and bicycle firm of Dresden is enlarging its factory.

"A strong recovery is also taking place in the automobile factories: the Adler firm is increasing its capital from 28 to 100 million marks to meet orders, and the Benz firm is increasing its capital from 32 to 100 million marks as well.

"Then the Soviet Russian government ordered 700 locomotives from a Karlsruhe company which divided them between 19 different factories.

"Overall, activity in the metallurgical and mechanical plants is more than satisfactory."

The field towards which German industry is turning is Russia. The newspaper reports illustrate daily this work, now very advanced, of penetration. As for the state of mind of the Germans with regard to France, it has not changed and can be summed up in these two words: hatred and contempt. But above all important in the German mentality is the conviction that Germany was not defeated militarily on the battlefields, but was knocked down by the blockade. The fact is that the German university youth, whose importance in social life is enormous, is already moving in an atmosphere of revenge.

If France lingers, in this uncertain twilight of 1922, to establish a balance, it draws the most discouraging conclusions. The aim of the Treaty of Versailles was to render Germany “*forever*” harmless. It began by taking away all her weapons. Will they at least leave me this spade? - asked a Michele, a German peasant, in a large drawing of the Simplicissimus. There were peremptory terms for the delivery of the weapons. The weapons have been delivered. Special commissions are continually searching every corner of Germany. In reality, especially in relation to France, which today has eight hundred thousand men under the flag and a fantastic war equipment that amounts to tens of thousands of cannons, Germany is unarmed. But the spirits are armed. But there are in Germany seven to eight million veterans, tens of thousands of officers, gymnastic societies, private police companies, a vast mass, in short, that can be organized at any moment. There are, above all, 62 million Germans in Germany. And what forms and means will the future war have? The disarmament of Germany is such that it does not reassure France. France tended to dismember the Reich. It is incredible how France is tied to its traditions in matters of foreign policy: there is still, fifty years after the Breach of Porta Pia, a Mediterranean anti-Italian thesis to which Poincaré himself seemed to be inclined and there is still the thesis that could be called anti-Prussian and pro-Bavarian. Now all attempts to break the Reich have failed. Failed on the Rhine, failed in Munich. The Reich is one. Prussia still dominates it. Berlin is still the powerful and pulsating heart of the German people. The Munich rebellion is more literary than political and is not such as to threaten the unity of the German homeland. France had a maximum program: to dismember the Reich: now it is reduced to the “veto” of a minimum program: to prevent the union of Austria with Germany. But even on this terrain the game is not safe. Who can guarantee that a plebiscite will be avoided which in the Austrian case would give much more disheartening results for France than that for Upper Silesia? When the veto has

loosened (now there is also a direct interest of Italy in keeping it tight), Vienna will leave Prague, to head towards Berlin. New increase of the German mass. With the increase of the mass, the force of attraction of the same increases. The four million Germans incorporated into Czecho-Slovakia, which is one of the most paradoxical states in the world, where four or a little more million Czechs form the dominant nucleus of a state that has six other different peoples (just like Austria-Hungary of Habsburg memory, which proves that situations sometimes unfold in a rhythm of tragedy and other times in a time of farce), the four million Germans incorporated into Prague will fall back on Berlin and the German mass planted in the heart of Europe will return towards the eighty million inhabitants, closed in an ungrateful territory and, except in the south, without borders. With the Treaty of Versailles, France intended to crush Germany economically, imposing a fantastic indemnity, taking away the Saar basin, the colonies, a large part of the railway, port and river equipment, the merchant navy, a huge quantity of livestock. Here too, failure. The indemnity evaporates. The 132 billion - which already represent the result of a Franco-English compromise - appear ever more distant. The power of the Reparations Commission becomes nominal, since the Supreme Council is taking charge of the question, as it did at Cannes, by granting the moratorium to Germany. There is another fact which belongs to the category of imponderables, but whose practical effects are being felt ever more clearly: Germany is no longer morally isolated in the world, while France is precisely threatened with this isolation, against which the accusations which were directed against Germany yesterday are being raised from various quarters, especially from the world of the "businessmen" of North American democracy, and ever more loudly.



With this factual situation the Cannes Conference opened. The Franco-English contrast was once again very clear. England looks at the situation from a social and European point of view. It brings to this examination its realistic spirit and its internal needs. European crisis means stagnation of business. Stagnation of business means unemployment. In England the figure of the unemployed is worrying: two million. It is therefore necessary to carry out a "relaxation" in this social crisis. Specific: concessions to Germany, economic consortium, Genoa conference. France looks at the situation from a strictly national point of view and not a social and non-European one. It is about its guarantee or rather its existence. It is about its enormously deficit state budget. France has no large industries and the figure of its unemployed is negligible. In short, England was guided in Cannes by European concerns, France by national concerns. But France had sent to Cannes a flexible and malleable man, a tired lawyer, with democratic and radical tendencies, and therefore more easily pliable to Lloyd George's solicitations. Discussions began and every day France retreated a few steps. On the ground of reparations, which was what most interested the French, since it was the only means left to them to paralyze or arrest the German recovery and to put their state budget back in order, on the ground of reparations, the two billion gold in currency that had been fixed in May 1921 were reduced to 720 million payable in installments throughout 1922. Given the Belgian priority and the cost of the armies of occupation, very little was left for France. In his project for European reconstruction, Lloyd George obeyed three categories of factors: English Germanophile pacifism, represented by Mainard Keynes, the high business world of the City and Laborism, whose memorial seemed to be the outline of the speech given on the first day in Cannes. Then a European consortium, destined to revive Central and South-Eastern Europe, then a Conference of Genoa. Both in the European Consortium and for the Conference of Genoa, the Germans - already

heard at Cannes, no longer as accused, as at Versailles, but as plenipotentiaries - are elevated to the same conditions as all the other Nations, with equal rights. At this point, Millerand and the French right, which on the whole represents the dominant state of mind in France, rise up: Briand runs to Paris to justify himself, almost like someone accused of treason, Poincaré succeeds him. The crisis is fatal. The deficit of Cannes is tremendous, compared to the active. What does the fine English gesture of giving up 450 million gold marks for the cost of the English army of occupation on the Rhine matter? England can afford these luxuries. What is the value of a guarantee pact limited - in space - to the Rhine border and - in time - to ten years, during which Germany cannot be in a position to attempt a rematch?

## VI

The fall of Briand and the arrival of Poincaré - one of the critics of the Treaty of Versailles, because he still finds it insufficiently severe - have this meaning: France wants to escape from the grip in which it is perpetually held by German obsession and English blackmail. Perhaps, not even with the Germans under the walls of Paris, France went through such a delicate moment. To renounce the Genoa Conference means to isolate itself morally and materially from the European continent, it means to "morally" play Germany's game. To go to Genoa means to meet with the Germans on equal terms, after which it is no longer necessary to speak of sanctions on the basis of further occupations of territories, such as the Ruhr basin. To go to Genoa means to officially recognize the government of those soviets, which no later than yesterday acclaimed as honorary members Marty and Badina, condemned by the French courts for the Black Sea mutinies and become symbols of French extremism. By what means will France be able to overcome this fearful situation? The events of the coming weeks will

provide the answer. In the meantime, from a moral point of view, the situation of France is worsening daily. Men's memory is weak. Few are ready to remember that France was invaded twice by the Germans. Few are ready to recognize that a third attempt is still among the possibilities of the future. In the universal misery, in the universal longing of Europeans to emerge from this period of uncertainty, France is judged as the only factor disturbing the European reorganization, the only militaristic nation in the world. No one thinks that, with the Treaty of Versailles having fallen to pieces, France can only count on its guns. Everyone - by necessity or by faith - is inclined to believe in the pan-European ideologies of Lloyd George. It is certain that these ideologies respond to a "fact" increasingly widespread in the European conscience. There are two possibilities: to get back on our feet, and as soon as the wounds still open from the unprecedented carnage have healed, to begin again? Or get back on our feet, to work together, above all as Europeans? The English world obeys a rather optimistic conception of the European future; the French world a rather pessimistic conception. Will the Germany of tomorrow, populous and prolific, full of rancor and agitated by old dreams of empire that have never vanished, the Germany of tomorrow, metropolis of Russia whose colonization it has already begun, be as peaceful as Lloyd George presumes? Will it adapt to living as equals in that European concert, which shines through as the ultimate goal to be achieved through all of Lloyd George's oratorical manifestations? Wouldn't it be infinitely tragic if - through the plans for European reconstruction - victorious France went to the aid of defeated Germany, to better enable and accelerate the hour of redemption? On the other hand, the progressive impoverishment of large masses of Europeans - added to the general crisis of spirits, can provoke the beginning of new social movements, movements of despair - whose epilogue would be the general ruin, therefore, also, the French ruin.

In this fourth post-war year, Europe truly seems to have arrived at one of the decisive turning points in its history.

**Benito Mussolini**

## **THE BANKING MOMENT**

**“The badly stretched nerves,,**

Dante, to tell the truth, when in the XV canto of the Inferno he speaks of Bishop Andrea dei Mozzi, who

from the Servant of the Servants  
he was transformed from Arno to Bacchiglione  
where he left his badly strained nerves

gives to this word nerves a very different meaning from the one we attribute to it today; and the bad prosthesis is an adjective of such evil meaning and power that one would hardly dare to explain it to the chaste ears of the candid reader. In our century, life having become more intense in stimuli and reactions, the lord nerves have become sovereign over the muscles and tendons and bones and veins, and over all the viscera.

Even today, however, nerves, even in their most extensive domain and broadest sense, sometimes for good, and more often for bad, tense, extend and protrude, and this happens to individuals, as well as to social classes and nations.

France is, without doubt, among the nations of the universe, the richest in nervous energy: she has given proof of it, throughout her history, in sudden defeats and in desperate energies. She gave a marvelous demonstration of it when the entire ferocious power of the invasion weighed upon her, and she, making of herself bow and lever, shield and axe, resistance and offense, stretched and strained (and well she stretched then, by God!) all her powerful nerves; when thus, for herself and for others, by herself and with others, she stood, and conquered.

The same and different thing happens to her today, after a more than human effort, as happens to temperaments that are too predominantly nervous, if they have spent themselves excessively: similar to a woman in a fit of hysteria or epilepsy, because of the terror of the agony that passed yesterday, because of the fury of the victory conquered today, because of the fear that the defeated enemy may rise again tomorrow, she trembles restlessly, and still tenses and extends all her nerves (badly stretched now), and it grieves those who love her, and those who would finally like peace for a tormented and tired humanity.

Another and more serene proof of balanced nervous strength has been given by Italy: and it is perhaps the old Roman blood, accustomed to suffer greatly in order to be prepared to act strongly when necessary. We gave proof of these very solid and firm nerves in the anxious eve of the war and in the thoughtful resolution of it; we gave proof after the horror of Caporetto, when we hardened ourselves in the resistance on the Piave until the victory of Vittorio. We gave proof then in reabsorbing the socialist poison, squeezing from our veins the antidote of the fasces, and reabsorbing this too through an effort of discipline when the cure seemed sufficient; we give proof today, while the crisis hits our economy, weaker than that of other great Nations, of blows beyond comparison stronger and more repeated. The Ilva and its chain; after the Ilva, the Ansaldo; after the Ansaldo, the Sconto. They are many, many hundreds of millions, perhaps lost, certainly immobilized and removed from availability for a period of time that is poorly predictable; they are, above all, initiatives that have been thwarted, businesses already underway and made impossible, industries and businesses that drew means and support from the entities now affected, discredit that affects us abroad, an atmosphere that is polluted by scandals and infected with suspicions. All this follows a chronic crisis, common to other countries, due not to excess production but rather to defects in distribution (transport, currencies, government bans,

customs barriers, removal from the world market of vast areas of production and consumption), defects that have made it difficult for countries that produce in excess to place products, because it is increasingly difficult for countries in need to purchase them. This crisis, in Italy, if on the one hand was more attenuated and less felt because the high exchange rates made us a protective wall, on the other hand it was increased by the state of mind of the working masses that culminated in the occupation of the factories, and that only now shows signs of a healthier appreciation of reality. It was aggravated above all by some disastrous experiments in state demagogy, and we will mention in passing the tax on wealth, the ferocious and indiscriminate confiscation of surplus profits, the threat of the compulsory nominativity of securities not yet disappeared, and in general a fiscal system that seemed to have taken as its program that of terrorizing foreign capital and pushing home-grown capital to emigrate.

Well, all this culminates, within a few weeks, in the arrest of our two largest companies, or rather industrial groups, in the moratorium of one of the most powerful of our credit institutions, and what happens in our squares and in our streets?...

Nothing. People are going back to work; our good and strong bourgeoisie, the one that gave the improvised heroic officers to the great war and the improvised industrialists to the workshops in the rear lines, grits its teeth and tenses its nerves, but keeps its brains in place, as after Caporetto, as on another Piave and waiting for another victory. The depositors do not crowd the other Credit Institutions; they have faith, despite everything, *against men, against omens, against everything*, faith in destiny, because they have faith in themselves. And if this is proof that the framework of our commerce, of our industries is good, that the organization of our great Credit Institutions is solid, it is also and above all a magnificent demonstration of good sense, of nervous balance, of strength.

It is premature to pass judgment on the Government's measures on this occasion before we know with some precision what the real situation of the Discount Bank is. Certainly, it has shown courage and resistance to pressures that cannot be lacking: courage and resistance that are not used in parliamentary and popular regimes. It can indeed be said from now that the word moratorium has lent itself abroad to interpretations that are not favorable to Italy's credit, and that some even doubt whether it was appropriate, faced with the exceptional situation, to create exceptional rules, tailor-made, so to speak, *to the person*. On the other hand, it can well be argued that the common measures suitable for the failures of partnerships are not - even in normal circumstances - entirely suitable for joint-stock companies.

Apart from this, which is a discussion that has been overcome by the fact, many problems and many unknowns remain, and only one - to tell the truth the most immediately dangerous - has been resolved: we mean the stock market liquidation of December and January. There remains, to mention one more, the question of the overseas branches of the Institute, since the situation of an entity that is partly bankrupt and partly not is not admissible, since American legislation does not contemplate a moratorium. There remains, to mention another, the question of cashier's checks, which seems difficult to treat in the same way as interest-bearing deposits. Above all, we repeat, the real situation of the entity must be ascertained, and only after that will it be possible to judge what has been done and what can be done.

But the important thing is that, if the financial repercussions are not yet all calculable, the psychological repercussions of the event in the public spirit have passed and surpassed with admirable and composed serenity. Three weeks have not passed since the closing of the branches of the Discount Bank and in Milan a conference is being held where the Italian exporters, the cream of the traders and

industrialists of our country, are summoned by the Minister of Commerce, not to discuss what has happened and to demand measures or express complaints, but to advise and recommend to the Government on the best ways to usefully start and profitably place the products of our soil and our work in foreign markets.

Another truth emerges from these facts, and perhaps it is not yet perceived and evaluated in its full measure, although it is instinctively felt, and gives, in part, the reason for the calm with which the latest, yet very serious, events have been received.

The so-called war armor that, for many years, the already belligerent peoples had to forge and wear, was complex and composed of more pieces and with more joints than were at the time the tools used by our Milan, famous for its Biraghi and its Crivelli.

There was not only an army and navy with cadres numerous beyond belief, and not all - especially in the higher ranks - easily dispatched and liquidated. There was a war bureaucracy, grown out of all proportion and which still does not want to abandon the functions it took, and defends its positions inch by inch and from trench to trench, indeed it still takes the offensive and wants increases in staff and salaries. There was (and still is) a war currency, that is, an inflation of the symbols representing money, such as has never been seen or thought of in the apocalyptic dreams of the most imaginative economists; and, as an appendix, a public war finances careless of the expenses and debts growing to infinity, and private finances accustomed by an apparent wealth to spend without counting, to multiply fictitious needs and luxurious habits. There was (and still is, not diminished by the disillusionments of lean times) a war psychology of the trader and the merchant, accustomed to absolutely and proportionally fabulous profits which he can no longer give up. There was (it is just disappearing now) that of the war worker, who, after his exemption, having made his skin safe, railed against those who



risked it and against those who paid in person, while he himself, the worker, guzzled liters, and mangled white meat, and nourished his intellect a little with adventure films, a little with the cartoons of Scalarini.

Finally there were, and it is they who are now crumbling, the war industry and the war bank. Both were useful, necessary, precisely because they fulfilled, by improvising the organ suited to the function, the abnormal, temporary and enormous needs that the war imposed. Their criteria were (and had to be) opposed and contrary to those that science and practice teach as suitable for normal times. The industries were created without capital, without workers, without machines, without factories, everything improvised from one moment to the next. There was no need to look for customers or outlets for the goods, there being only one customer, the State: a safe customer, and paying any sum, while in the rest every commodity rose in cost so much, that it was safe speculation to buy any commodity at any price to resell it after any time with an infallible profit. There was no need to worry about the original cost of production, nor about the search for buyers. The war bank then, since all banks are (and cannot be anything else) functions and exponents of the economy on which they live, financed these affairs; and therefore systematic errors arose, both by financing firms that did not offer secure reliability, and by erroneous direct participations in enterprises that not only did not bring in profits but also significant losses, and finally by risky subsidies to industrial companies that resulted in great damage to the interests of the Bank itself. It is not we who speak: it is the Roman magistrate, and the words refer to the Discount Bank.

Let the war organisms adapt, if possible, to the necessary return to normality, and if not, let the pieces of the armor disappear, and fall rusty and useless. Just as they were left useless in the happy Bacchiglione, those nerves

already badly stretched on the flourishing banks of the Arno by the wicked prelate that Dante would have seen wriggling and roasting under the rain of fire,

if he had had a desire for such a stubbornness.

**D' Ezer**

We announce for the next issues important articles:

MARGHERITA G. SARFATTI: Papini and heresy.

Hon. ALBERTO DE STEFANI: Plutocratic hierarchy.

Prof. ROBERTO A. MURRAY: The economic world before and after the war.

Hon. PAOLO ORANO: The book that must be written.

Prof. G. RENSI: The electoral principle and the hereditary principle.

## **Italians outside Italy**

### **Interior renovation**

Once upon a time... an Italy was being born. It was laboriously creating, within the cities or on a wider surface, the forms of the State. It was struggling to distance itself from the German influences of the Holy Roman Empire and, even before that, from the Greek influences of the other Eastern Empire that had been felt for centuries in the south of the peninsula, on the islands, in Rome, Ravenna, Venice. It was beginning to put its vernacular dialects into writing, among which one, of magnificent purity and harmony, destined to become the Italian literary language, a sign and instrument of spiritual unity. It was turning its reflections on the high problems of the spirit and was beginning an Italian philosophy or, better, it was conceiving in its own ways, nourishing with its own substance, vivifying with itself the universal problems of philosophy. He elaborated, transforming barbaric and Roman and vulgar elements, drafting royal constitutions and municipal statutes, collecting customs from living reality or glossing texts in

schools, a new law that is or will be Italian law. He resumed building large moles, first sacred and then profane, first public and then private; to sculpt marble and stone; to paint and decorate and adorn with passion and a lively sense of beauty; to visibly and tangibly manifest his interior life that has become more lively, richer and more expansive, more in tune with the outside world and nature. Those people, in short, stopped living spiritually on the leftovers of the rich banquet of their ancestors, they were no longer content to slowly and silently ruminate on what Romans and Germans or perhaps Arabs and Greeks had left and brought, but they created their own life and their own culture. All the signs, in short, of the birth of a people or a Nation, which in the indistinct Roman-Germanic-Christian world identified itself and showed its own face. We are between the 11th and 15th centuries.

### **Expansion**

This highly creative phase of its history was for Italy, or for that complex of forces that virtually are Italy and foreshadowed Italy, also a phase of irradiation of activity and men beyond the limits of the peninsula, over the coasts of the three continents bathed by the Mediterranean and also within central and western Europe. The new Italian society, while internally it gave life to small municipal fatherlands and felt, in the most fertile spirits, the germination of the sense of a fatherland not municipal but national, launched itself into an almost cosmopolitan action. The rapid increase in population that occurred in our country, more than anywhere else, around the year 1000; the demographic development, at times astonishing, of many of our old urban centers that continue to constitute the backbone of the peninsula; the change in the juridical and social conditions of the peasants; the reactivated exchange of services and products between city and countryside, almost through a restored division of labor; this and more determined

a sum of new needs that only trade with economically different countries could satisfy. And here is the Mediterranean traffic that resumes, especially with the East. This is undoubtedly a European fact, as well as an Italian one: since all of Europe, I mean Romano-Germanic Europe, turned towards that sea and the Levant, little by little as it too was repopulated and organized around its centers - great fiefdoms, cities, monarchies - and generated a small feudal aristocracy in disarray and fermented with a spirit of adventure and combative religiosity and desire for wealth. The dark effort of those peoples flowed into the Mediterranean, converging from different sides, in the time of their new, more organic arrangement. But the Italians first and more than the others: they at the center of that sea; they still tied - Venetians, Apulians, Amalfitans, etc. - by so many ties with the Byzantine Empire; they pressed with more urgency by the Arab danger and forced to react; they were more economically advanced. Their major coastal cities, then, Venice, Pisa, Genoa, Amalfi, placed on the water or on poor land, all ponds or rocks, were in need of importing goods and products from overseas, to exchange them for foodstuffs from the hinterland. They also felt the new needs of Europe that found in the peninsula the center of Catholicism now energetically led by Rome, the ideal seat and the primary purpose of the practical activity of the Empire, the marvelous signs of a great past that was felt as the heritage of all, a long pier stretching out towards Asia and Africa, ports of embarkation and ships and nautical experience and capital that were lacking elsewhere. At the same time, and even more so at a later stage, the progress of our industries, the need to import certain raw materials (wool) and to export manufactured goods, the conditions of feudal Europe where kings, barons, churches and monasteries and the common people were all beset by an urgent need for a circulating medium, while in our country there had already been a certain accumulation of capital and development of financial capacity; all

this also oriented our people towards Spain and France, towards the Netherlands and England and Germany.

### **Towards the Levant**

Thus, from the end of the 10th and 11th centuries onwards, the old ports of the peninsula were seen to be repopulated and others opened up to navigation; the Alps were almost lowered and their passes multiplied, marked by large hospice monasteries; the Italians were energetically making an act of presence in the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic, in the seas of Provence and Spain, Africa and the Levant, now free and defended from Saracen and Slavic piracy. In the Mediterranean and in the East this activity of armed merchants and shrewd migrants preceded the great Crusades, thanks especially to Venice and Amalfi and Bari who operated in Byzantium; to Genoa and Pisa who already in the 10th and throughout the 11th century faced the Arabs in Calabria and Sardinia, in Sicily and Africa and Spain, and began to form the first colonial nuclei here and there. It developed and strengthened during the Crusades, in the 12th century, in which our people participated as ship-owners and traders, to supply the Crusaders, and as fighters, alongside others or with their own expeditions. The first Crusade was especially decisive, which was, in a certain sense, a European continuation and on a wider stage, of Tyrrhenian and African enterprises carried out by our cities, from Pisa onwards. While the Arab world was in pieces and the Byzantine Empire had entered a phase of decadence that did not even involve ephemeral revivals, the Italians, the vanguard of Europe, were in turn taking the offensive. For them, the goal was not so much Jerusalem as Constantinople. Two worlds faced each other: old and young, patrons and protégés now out of tutelage. Culture still glittering, but immobilized, cold, sterile, superficial, on one side. On the other hand, warm hearts, creatures with an still turbid but potentially rich interior life that presses

from within to translate itself into organic works, into clear thoughts, Venetians, Genoese, Pisans, had, after the Crusade, almost mastery of the maritime routes, possessed money, were able to decide the fate of the small feudal lordships that arose with the Crusade itself, influenced the politics of the Greek Empire that each of them wanted to gain for himself. A little they imposed themselves, a little they were sought and solicited. Commercial privileges and various concessions followed one another ever more numerous and extensive in Constantinople, in Antioch, in Beirut, in Tripoli of Syria, in Laodicea, in St. John of Acre, in Jaffa, in Jerusalem, in Cyprus, in Damascus, in Caesarea, in Aleppo, in Alexandria, in Damietta, in Sfax, in Tunis, etc. At the same time, Venetian and Apulian nuclei were forming on the opposite Adriatic shore. After the Greek wave that 1500 or 2000 years earlier had covered the coasts of Puglia and Calabria and Sicily and Campania and then led Athens and Sparta to fight their wars for supremacy in Italy and pushed Pyrrhus to land there with his elephants, here is a new wave in the opposite direction, towards ancient Epirus and Greece and the East.

At first, the Venetians had the primacy there, among the Italian cities. They were closer, they had not suffered Saracen devastation or the hindrance of feudal lordships, nor were they busy in the Tyrrhenian islands, like Genoa and Pisa. Perched in their almost aquatic bird nests, they were more daring and adventurous, true "children of the sea", as a Byzantine historian says. They were also advantaged by the ancient bond with Byzantium, their greater knowledge of the environment, the fact that they had been morally part of that same oriental world that had its heart in Constantinople. Their primacy was confirmed and almost a European seal at the fourth Crusade, which was almost their enterprise, after the great harangue in St. Mark's had accepted and proclaimed it, in front of the French and Flemish ambassadors who had come to ask for help (year 1201). The East, now all sown with Venetian settlements, is almost the center of gravity of the

Republic. Constantinople, where until a few years before there were, next to 3000 Pisans, and a few thousand Genoese, about 10,000 Venetians, is a half-Venetian city, with a large quarter and an arsenal and a castle and a podestà to whom all the Venetians of the East are subject. The Patriarch is also Venetian. The Doge himself seems to have to establish his seat there: that is, the old Enrico Dandolo who has, in the Piazza dei Veneziani, his large palace. Indeed, after the fall of the city, he is almost proclaimed Emperor, he who was already a functionary of the Empire in its lagoons.

This situation lasted until after the mid-13th century. The restoration of the Greek dynasty in 1261, desired and prepared by Genoa, marked the triumph of the Superb and its popular Doge Guglielmo Boccanegra, who had inaugurated a constitutional order in Genoa not very different from that of Venice. The Venetian quarter of Constantinople passed to the Genoese; and with it, other quarters and lodges and warehouses and churches in Smyrna, Salonika, Chios, Crete, and Negroponte. Galata and Pera, at the gates of the capital, were Genoese. From then on, a division of the two zones of Genoese and Venetian influence became increasingly evident. Genoa was stronger in Syria, in the southern and coastal part of Little Armenia (Adana), in Constantinople, and in the Black Sea. Venice, on the other hand, consolidated itself in the Aegean. The large islands were hers, especially Crete, the "little Venice", as it was called, and Euboea, the base of Venetian power in the East. Pisa, on the other hand, which was sufficiently placed in Constantinople, Cyprus, Accone and at certain times and places enjoyed a preponderant position, had instead in North Africa its most proper field of action, especially west of the Syrtis, in Tunis, in Bona, in Tripoli, in Mehedia, in Sfax, in Bugea, in Oran, in Ceuta. Tunis had, besides the usual Consuls, also Pisan Captains of the Port, whom some modern writers interpret as heads of a mercantile

corporation. The possession of Sardinia assured Pisa a good point of support for African navigation.

Within these geographical limits, the multifaceted work expanded and the entrepreneurial spirit of our maritime citizens asserted itself and sometimes ran wild, and through them, also those of the interior, of Lucca and Florence, of Verona and Bologna, first under the name of Venetians and Pisans, on ships, with privileges, in the districts of Pisa or Venice, then some of them with ever-increasing autonomy from their frontmen and patrons. The Municipalities acted as a political unit. Associations acted, such as the Genoese Maone associations that were formed for specific enterprises (for Ceuta, at the end of the 13th century, for Scio in 1347, for Cyprus in 1374, etc.), taking on the organization and execution of the enterprises themselves, supplying ships and crews, advancing money. Finally, they acted, or at least emerged in the action and in the brief mention of it in the chronicles, single individuals, with initiatives only partly linked to those of their city, merchants, pirates, conquerors together. And it was not just a question of navigation between Italy and the East; not just of commercial stations, to be used as a support point for ships and places of storage and negotiation of imported or exported goods and commodities. But in almost all the Levantine and North African cities and regions mentioned above, there were stable groups, and in a stable location, of people who came from Italy or were born there to Italians, alongside the more numerous indigenous population. Sometimes, almost two neighboring cities: as in Altoluogo, near ancient Ephesus, at the mouth of the Baghdad - Constantinople road, on the Aegean. There, after the 14th century, there is, above, the Turkish city; below, along the coast, the Italian city. They traded and sailed. Many practiced coastal navigation between Syria and Egypt, between Syria and Armenia. We do not have precise figures. But it is a question, for several cities, of many thousands of Italians: so in Constantinople, so in Alexandria. And



usually, the same passions, the same competitions and discords and ferocious hatreds, agitated and often devastated the colonies, as the Italian cities.

Our thoughts turn to the Greek colonies that had flourished on those same coasts of the Black Sea and Anatolia about two millennia earlier; although ours were perhaps less solid organisms, less deeply rooted in that soil, more inclined to feel with great immediacy all the vicissitudes and crises of the mother cities. The colonists obtained there greater or lesser freedom of trade, use of their own law, dependence on their own leaders, exemption from local taxes, houses, roads, squares, mills, baths, landings in the port; sometimes, even a discrete area of land around, cultivated by natives on behalf of the Italian owner or possessor, as in Syria, where this complex of privileges was greater than elsewhere, almost in relation to the more intense traffic conveyed there by the roads of Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad. Each of these colonies lives on its own, with its own bailiff, if Venetian; consul, or vice-consul, or podestà, if Genoese or Pisan. But there is no lack of efforts, especially on the part of Genoa and Venice, to give them a certain unitary organization or, better, to subject them all, in the various zones, to the superior control of an official sent by the mother country. Thus from Constantinople all the colonies of the Black Sea and Asia Minor are supervised; and the administration of the Genoese colonies of the Black Sea is placed in Caffa. The powers of these high officials are extended, in the judicial, military, political order, towards the colonists and the princes of the place. The Venetian one in Constantinople appears to us almost like a small emperor, next to the other more legitimate but more discredited. It is another thing, naturally, where small lordships have been formed by the work of powerful citizens, who have succeeded in conquering this or that island or city with their own means and in obtaining recognition for it from the mother country. Thus the Sanudo, lords at Naxos; the Dandolo, at Andros near Euboea; the Querini, at Stampalia; the Contarini at

Ascalon. And then, many Genoese: the Gattilusio in Eno, Imbro, Lesbos, Taso, etc.; the Cattaneo in Metelino; the Senarega in Castel d'Elci on the mouth of the Dniester; Enrico Pescatore, for a few years, in Crete and Malta; the Zaccaria da Castello, in Focea and Scio. One of them, in fact, Martino, was given the title of "King and despot of Asia Minor" in the first half of the 14th century by a pretender to the throne of Byzantium. Ephemeral lordships, others long-lasting. And they represent a kind of new barony, made up of ancient ship-owners and merchants, not always more docile and submissive than the old one to the authority of the Republic from which they recognize the fief and to which they pay or should pay an annual tax. In the initial inability of the small city states to exercise direct dominion over so many lands, this arrangement is like an intermediate phase, similar to that of the large Companies which in the 17th and 18th centuries prepared the colonial empires of France and England: a phase, however, which did not develop for the cities.

Usually, the colonists are attached to the coasts or to the very nearby hinterland. The goods arrive there from the interior, without having to go looking for them. But the colonies are also a starting point for more distant countries. Once they have developed the spirit of enterprise and have had a sense of real or fantastic riches beyond the mountains and beyond the desert belt, men dare. In the 13th century, in Conia, in the center of Anatolia, the trade of certain goods is a monopoly of the Venetians and Genoese. Who, with Pisans and Piacentines, also try the routes of little Armenia, from the ports of Cilicia, and carry out caravan trade for Asia Minor and Persia. And in Sis, in Armenia, capital of the Rupenid dynasty, a numerous Genoese colony settles, provided with privileges, warehouses, and quarters in almost all the cities of the Kingdom. From their Black Sea bases, then, it is known how much the Genoese penetrated, to sell goods and buy up grain, in the regions of the Caspian and the Don, of Wallachia and the Bulgarian

Empire, where they met with Venetians and Florentines who came from the Adriatic coast. Some Italians pushed as far as the heart of Muscovy. Not to mention the many who went to Poland and Hungary, in competition with the more numerous German merchants: a small Italian participation in that vast movement which, starting from Germany, almost in reverse of the Aryan immigrations, gave life after the 11th century to the new cities, started trade, began industry and mining exploitation among the Slavs and Magyars and Romanians, and formed the first nuclei of the bourgeoisie there.

But the greatest pilgrimage into the interior of a boundless continent dates back to the second half of the 13th century, the culminating moment of Italian trade and colonization. After Giovanni da Pian dei Carpine, Giovanni da Monte Corvino, Oderico da Pordenone, here are the Polos, Marco Polo above all, "*the first traveler of the whole world and India*". His father Niccolò and his uncle Matteo had prepared the way for him, having gone beyond the Tigris and been welcomed by the Great Khan in Bucara. On a second journey, the young Marco followed them and lived for a long time in the Mongolian court of Kublai Khan, where "he learned the Tartar customs and their language and their letters, and became a wise man and of great value beyond measure", employed by that King in offices and embassies, for 27 years, up to the most remote parts of Asia, up to the two oceans that bathe it to the east and south. Marco returned to Europe in 1295. Having fallen into the hands of the Genoese, his imprisonment made it easier for him to carry out the task, which he had perhaps already set himself, of recounting the wonderful things he had seen and experienced. "I believe it was pleasure of God our return, so that the things that are in the world could be known; that... and there was never a man, neither Christian, nor Berber, nor pagan, who ever sought so much in the world, as did Mr. Marco, son of Mr. Niccolò Polo, noble and great citizen of the city of Venice". Thus he closes his Million. In these same years, the

Genoese, the Vivaldi brothers, ventured upon a great ocean, no less mysterious and unknown than the great continent of Marco Polo, they recognized the western coasts of the Atlantic, they preceded the other Genoese Niccolò di Recco, the Venetian Alvise Cadamosto, the Florentine Angelo del Tegghiaio, who would later visit those same coasts and discover the Canaries for the Portuguese... These were the first approaches for a great advance of Europe, beyond the old limits, to the East and the West. The Italians are at the head. They represent then, truly, the initiative. For them, the physical world grows; how, thanks to their efforts, the world of the spirit grows.

### **Towards the West**

The picture here has slightly different lines and colors. No longer countries politically in disrepair; but, on the contrary, in the process of being constituted. Not a policy of cities, armed with fleets and, when necessary, small armies; but of individual citizens and small groups, generally for short stays in foreign lands. Although, when the interests of individuals were very vast, even the politics of their city was affected: and here, the traditional Francophilia of the Florentine Republic.

In Western Europe, Spain is perhaps one of the first countries beaten by ours, as exporters of capital in addition to and before woolen cloth and silk. They also appear in Portugal, where later they will be very numerous and will train for oceanic trade and daring and will prepare Columbus. Restrictive measures on the freedom to trade and live there, provoked between the 13th and 14th centuries by indigenous competitors and by popular unrest against the advanced Genoese and, moreover, Tuscans, who lived in Barcelona and Aragon, induced them to turn towards France, where ours already frequented the Champagne fairs and where they found a vast field of financial activity. France in the 14th century is like the

second homeland of many Italians from the north and center. We remember Alighieri's lament that one left, for France, the house deserted. In Florence, fathers of sons who had failed or were bad at business were advised to send them to France. And when they returned from there, "they always had their hearts set on France." England became no less, and perhaps more, a destination for Italians. Milanese trade with the island had already begun at the end of the 12th century. Meanwhile, Flanders and Germany were being cultivated. And everywhere, agencies and branches of Italian banks, import and export of wool and cloth, movement of capital: to Lyon, Marseille, Paris, Troyes, Nuremberg, London, Bruges. Here, there were no populous colonies, which were sometimes almost small towns, as in the East: but nevertheless, discrete groupings, in streets all occupied by Lombards, as they generically called themselves. They were associated according to their cities of origin and the cities or regions of residence; and the individual associations federated, sometimes, within the whole Kingdom, with a general head who dealt with the King almost as if from power to power. Thus in France there was a "University of Lombard and Tuscan merchants", represented by Fulcone di Caccia, from Piacenza, who in 1277, following agreements with the King, transferred his legal headquarters to Nîmes, where also resided the particular associations of merchants from Asti, Alba, Bologna, Rome, Pistoia, Florence, Milan, Venice, Piacenza, Genoa, etc.

They are, for the natives, a kind of baptized Jews, often in competition with the authentic Jews and ready to supplant them, opposed by Jews and Christians alike, as usurers and monopolizers of the country's wealth for foreign countries. However, astute by the practice of a very advanced economy, having acquired a habit of simulation and dissimulation, strong in a lively and ready intelligence, an innate legal sense, a cosmopolitan spirit that is perhaps an ancient legacy, increased by contacts with the papacy, they manage to make their way in

economically backward countries and still completely outside of European economic circulation, such as, to the greatest extent, England, where raw materials that are highly sought after by us abound, but which no local industry uses; where money is scarce, especially after the expulsion of the Jews, and the Court and the aristocracy are ravenously seeking it. In fact, the Italians opened very large credits to the Crown, engaged in the wars in France. And in exchange they obtained contracts for the collection of taxes, offices and lucrative positions. Thus the Ricciardi of Lucca, who were among the first to touch England and also among the first to fail; and the Frescobaldi and the Bardi of Florence. Among them, that Gualtiero de' Bardi, controller of the royal mint in London, probable author of a *New Monetary Treaty*; first essay of that monetary literature that would be from the 16th to the 19th century almost an Italian specialty. Thus, also, the famous and infamous Musciatto and Biccio and Nicoluccio Franzesi, also Tuscans, who in France had honors and positions from Philip the Fair, were accomplices of royal frauds and abuses, and became very rich. "He rose first from a Florentine peasant to a merchant, then in France from a merchant to a knight," says Dino Compagni of Musciatto. And it is the career of many, who are, thus, a living document of the enormous importance that commerce had in shaping new people and creating a new aristocracy.

The Italian banking houses that worked beyond the Alps are legion. Financial history from the 13th to the 15th century knows the Scarampi, the Soleri, the Malabaila in Asti, a small city that for some centuries had the importance of a large city, for its military strength, for the daring of its merchants who were almost pioneers outside Italy, for the central place it occupied in the ambitious plans of the Milanese Viscontis, of France, of Savoy, of Monferrato; it knows the Borromeo, the Crivelli, the Pozzobonelli, the Taverna, etc., in Milan, the great center of Roman origin, which remained in vogue in the barbarian age, reaching undisputed

primacy at the time of the struggles against feudalism and the Germans, center of the rich plain between the Alps and the Po, at the mouth of the Alpine passes. And then Guinigi and Ricciardi, in Lucca; Salimbene, Tolomei, Bonsignori in Siena; Bardi, Ardinghelli, Acciaiuoli, Peruzzi, Albizzi, Spini, Cavalcanti, Medici, Sassetti, Frescobaldi in Florence. These were the small - and sometimes large - financial powers of the time, almost always guaranteed by large real estate holdings and closely linked to certain large industries that worked for export or drew raw materials and rough goods from abroad to be refined: wool industries, raw cloth imported from outside and refined, silk. Through finance, they were also political powers, within the city circle and outside it and outside the peninsula. Their position was strengthened by the intimate relationship in which many were with the Holy See, which entrusted Italian banks with the trust deposit and the transmission to Rome of the sums collected by collectors of tithes and ecclesiastical income in all parts of the Catholic world. And it is known that, after the Gregorian Reform, coinciding with the progress of the new money economy, those revenues began to flow ever more abundantly toward the center of Catholicism, Rome, and toward Italy as a whole: since there were endless Italian prelates who had, in the 13th and 14th centuries, offices and prebends in Germany, France, England. Rome thus took advantage of the Italian capitalist organization, at the same time that it promoted it. The Papacy facilitated the bankers' penetration into the world, and they the Papacy. It is the meeting, collaborating, supporting each other of two forces, both tending to assert themselves internationally and therefore, despite a certain intrinsic moral and doctrinal opposition, in solidarity. The fat cities of merchants and bankers therefore almost all tend toward Guelphism and the papal party; or they return to the papal party, if for a moment they have deviated from it. Those who in Italy, before others, established these relations with the Holy See, were the Sienese, great bankers in the sight of God, with their

Bonsignori, "the most renowned society in Tuscany and Lombardy, indeed in the world, the one that has always received the greatest trust, by declaration of popes, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, kings, barons, merchants, etc., always useful to its city at the Holy See and beyond the Alps", as they declared in a petition to the General Council of Siena, in April 1298. Now they are half ruined: "since no glory is eternal, so Satan has sown discord among the partners", adds the petition. In reality there had been Benevento, there had been the triumph of Charles of Anjou and the Curia. And the Florentines who had facilitated this triumph in order to see the Kingdom of Sicily opened to their trade and out of a desire for closer ties with the Holy See, had also reaped the benefits. Their competition had ruined their rivals. Then began that banking primacy, which was also commercial and industrial, as well as literary and artistic, of Florence, which lasted two centuries, resisting strongly even against fierce strokes of fortune and the general decay of the Italian economy.

### **Fertility and creation**

So: several centuries of fertility and creation. Because the Divine Comedy is creation as is the network of colonies, banks, and commercial bases, woven over so much of the world at that time. It all springs from the same spiritual energy, from the same capacity to dominate and enliven inert matter. Inside the cities, rapid renewal, rising classes and falling classes, association of forces and emergence of individual values, daily death that feeds daily life. Outside the city, daily widening of the radius of action, opening every door, now crashing into it with the iron bows of ships, like the Pisans against the chains of the port of Palermo in 1066, now insinuating themselves with the means of a more advanced economy and a broader experience of the world, of which the Italians are, between the 13th and 14th centuries, "the fifth element". They are two contemporary stories, which then form



one and one conditions the other. Because if the largest global activity would have been unthinkable, without a solid economic and political backbone formed in small local environments, this too, in turn, needed the sum of resources, the ardor and the impetus that contact with the outside procured for the citizens encamped under the banner of St. George of Genoa or of Mark the Evangelist, of the Pisan Virgin or of St. Ambrose of Milan. The nuclei of that well-squared aristocracy-bourgeoisie that carried the Commune on its shoulders and freed it from the Bishops and Counts, from the universal monarchy of the Empire and that of the Papacy and left its mark on the life of the countryside, sharpened their eyes also towards distant goals, beyond the seas and beyond the mountains. It was formed as a new chivalry, much more errant and adventurous than the other that had its true homeland in France and its matrix in feudal society; better armed to overcome obstacles and win over the faithful and the infidels alike; capable of building a denser, more resistant and lasting network of relationships; made up of new and yet ancient men, bold and yet subtle and shrewd, such as only a country with millenary experience but of renewed youth and spontaneity and originality could give. This new chivalry also wore armor and rode armed across the seas and aimed at territorial dominions and had poets in Provençal and in the Italian vernacular. But it also bought up and resold spices, and cereals, and silks; it opened a money exchange, exported fine cloth and soon usurious money; it populated the Levantine cities with itself and sowed conspicuous nuclei in the cities of Champagne and England and France; left notable traces and fertile seeds in the economic and intellectual life of various countries, from which it also drew material goods and spiritual enrichment, municipal glories and awareness of its own national being. An admirable activity for those who consider that it, with its vast and not ephemeral results, was the work, first of all, of a few large and medium and small maritime cities and then of a certain number of urban centers in the interior, which had cosmopolitan interests,

Florence, Lucca, Siena, Piacenza, Ästi, Milan, etc.: even if they also channeled and directed outside the peninsula the other thousand small streams, sprouting a bit everywhere in this land that seemed, for three or four centuries, an inexhaustible source, a whole nursery of men fit for command and capable of framing, with the Roman Church, with the means of the new economy, with the culture of the Renaissance, so many elements of the new Europe.

**Gioacchino Volpe**

### **The lands of the sacred Italian fire in 1796**

The armistice of Cherasco (April 26) and the lightning victory of General Buonaparte over the Austrian troops at Lodi (May 10) had suddenly caused the weak scaffolding that, by force of inertia, had traditionally supported the balance of the old Italian States for centuries to fall. The violent breath of the Revolution, which, contained in the Alps for almost four years by the tenacious Piedmontese resistance, had seemed to the inept governors a distant and not terrible threat, suddenly ran turbulently through all the lands of Italy and aroused terrors and hopes, brought the scourge of plunder and ruin and the benefit or illusion of freedom. While Buonaparte was moving on Milan, the Duke of Parma signed a pact of neutrality, which was a partial submission, and the Duke of Modena, taking refuge in the hospitable lands of the Venetian Republic, left in his dominions a Council of Government, which was not slow to follow the example of Parma.

Having occupied Milan, pushed his troops as far as Peschiera and Verona, to guard the passes opened towards the Alps, and then begun the siege of Mantua, General Buonaparte immediately felt the need to secure his flank and rear in the imminent struggle, which was easy to imagine bitter, with the new Austrian armies, and from the first days of June he turned his mind to central Italy, which

the pacts with Parma and Modena had opened up to him. It was necessary to avenge the reactionary impetus that had cost Ugo Basville the life in Rome; it was necessary to take advantage of the terror that the rapid French victories had generated; it was necessary to secure the passes of the Apennines and the strategic route towards the heart of the peninsula.

Starting from Tortona, with a body of seven or eight thousand men, along the beautiful roads of disarmed Emilia, preceded by General Augereau, on the evening of June 19, Buonaparte reached Bologna and, while professing that he wanted only to restore, as he expressed it in the proclamation of June 21, "to the Bolognese people the rights and privileges that had been taken from them", he occupied it militarily and formed it a military base for further operations towards Rome. In the following days, Ferrara was also occupied, and therefore, with Ravenna and Faenza, a part of Romagna.

If in Milan and Lombardy the French had found the easy enthusiasm of freedom, prepared for that matter by the slow but gradual movement of reforms; in Bologna and Ferrara they found a country, perhaps more backward, but still in possession of a conspicuous residue of the ancient traditions of municipal freedom and agitated by the new political parties promoted by a rapid economic transformation. Bologna had been subject to papal rule for many centuries, but always bore the motto *Liberty* inscribed in its coat of arms, preserved its ancient citizen representation with the Senate and held the strange privilege of sending its own ambassadors to the Court of Rome. Thus Ferrara, torn away just two centuries ago from its office as capital of a famous Duchy and subjected by diplomatic agreements to the pontiffs, had kept alive its ancient Senate and a certain autonomy. On the other hand, in Bologna and Ferrara, alongside the old reactionary party, linked to the interests of numerous secular and regular ecclesiastical establishments, a strong party of innovators had formed, especially in

the educated classes and the nobility, who, even before the French Revolution, under the impulse of the new economic circumstances, felt the need to change the government order, to impress a more accelerated movement on social life, to guarantee the rights of freedom of the citizens, heirs of a glorious communal tradition that had never been renounced. In the University of Bologna, for several decades, there had been a chair of natural law and of the people; the courageous ideas of a moderate Jansenism had penetrated and secret societies promoted by the centers of an international movement were already creeping in.

The sudden arrival of the French troops suddenly precipitated this already moved and agitated state of affairs. The easy enthusiasm immediately brought to the surface, in front of the old reactionary party, the turbid elements of an unbridled demagogy: but, supported by the ancient institutions of liberty brought back to life, a middle current was able to prevail at Bologna and Ferrara, which, despite the difficulties created for a disarmed people forced to suffer the depredations and the arbitrary acts of a foreign army, was able to maintain a normal line of government. Here another of the differences with the French Revolution was revealed, since, while in France it was a question of gaining *from the beginning* the rights of liberty and equality of citizens, for Italy instead it was only a return to the past. The Senate of Bologna and that of Ferrara, reinstated in the fullness of their sovereign rights, took over the government of public affairs with a firm hand, and it was immediately seen that they were not composed of new men, but, as Buonaparte judged them<sup>1</sup>, of "moderate and wise men", who had long been experienced in public administration.

Meanwhile the flame of liberty invaded other lands, and especially Reggio, where the new ideas had gained numerous followers. A secret embassy had already exposed the desire of the people of Reggio to General Buonaparte, but had been

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<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Napoleon*, I. n. 709, p. 447.

advised against any movement. However, on August 26, the revolt suddenly broke out: the citizens proclaimed their separation from the old Este duchy, erected the tree of liberty and conferred sovereign powers to the Senate, strengthened by new members. And shortly thereafter Modena also rose up and constituted its provisional government.

All these movements were pursuing a plan that had emerged in central Italy since the first triumph of French arms on the fields of Lombardy and Romagna; a plan that was clear in the minds of all those "moderate and wise" patriots and that one of them, Aldini, had not hesitated to expose to Buonaparte since June: to extend the movement for liberty in Italy, and then to bind all the liberated provinces into a single body, so that they would form a unitary State, as vast and powerful as possible and capable of withstanding every shock or every attempt at reaction. Enthusiastic about the incitements and promises of liberty of the French generals, and especially of Buonaparte, the Italians deluded themselves into thinking that their aspirations were supported by the action of France, without reflecting that liberty and independence, when they are not given for other and oblique purposes, are earned only with sacrifices and with one's own virtues. The letter of the abbot Venturi, written on July 28, 1796 from Paris, in immediate contact with the ruling circles of France at that time, is not only a just warning to beware of easy illusions, but also the sure proof of the reality and aims of that naive plan. "The whim of creating a republic, or as many separate republics, is awakened in the Italians," Venturi wrote that day to the Marquis Rangoni in Modena<sup>2</sup> - "is awakening... All these people believe that the French Republic will give them all its strength to establish themselves. The love of liberty makes them believe that their interest is the same as that of the Directory. The interest of France is not to create a powerful republic in Italy, and it is not even to create many

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<sup>2</sup> *Letters from various illustrious Italians and foreigners*, Reggio, 1841, vol. IV, page 207 and following.

separate republics, because these could at a moment unite in a single confederation and give France much to think about. France's interest is to exclude the Emperor (of Austria) from Italy, but not to raise up another new power against him, the Italian one...”.

But events were taking care to favor, at least in part, the aspirations of the Italian patriots. In July a new Austrian army, that of Wurmser, descended on Italy, and the French army was urged to have its backs secure towards the strategic node of the Apennines and to create friendly armed forces in Italy, which could eventually support the French troops. On August 9, General Buonaparte burst out in Milan with new incitements to Italian freedom, and the plan for the Lombard legion was already being formulated, while Reggio and Modena were claiming their freedom. In the proclamation to the Senate of Bologna, on September 26, Napoleon Buonaparte found his warmest and most sincere tone to incite the Italians to arm themselves and to rise to the dignity of a Nation and to formulate a sure promise: "It is now time for Italy to take an honorable place among the powerful Nations. Lombardy, Bologna, Modena, Reggio and Ferrara, and perhaps Romagna too, where it has been showing itself for so long, will make Europe marvel, renewing the finest days of Italy. Run to arms. The Italian country, already free, is rich and populous. Make the opponents of your rights and your freedom tremble.” And at the same time Buonaparte, who felt the military needs closely, urged the French Directory to consent to the union of the liberated cities of central Italy, and thus supported, with the weight of his authority, the requests that a few days before, in Paris, the Bolognese deputation had presented, especially through the eloquent voice of Antonio Aldini, who represented the necessity of uniting the provinces liberated by French arms, so that they could aggregate and form a State strong enough to defend and preserve itself.

On October 12, a delegation of the liberated cities, Bologna, Ferrara, Modena and Reggio, met in Modena, and this convened an assembly of one hundred deputies, to be chosen in a determined proportion from the four cities, with the purpose of forming a confederation with common organs of direction and defense. The assembly, held in Modena a few days later, on October 16, decreed with unspeakable enthusiasm the confederation of the four provinces located this side of the Po, therefore called Cispadana. And as its first acts, it provided for the creation of an Italian legion, similar to the Lombard legion, and to issue a proclamation to the peoples of Italy, which was the first, indigenous and conscious promise of Italian freedom. This proclamation urged the people of Italy "to strive with all their might to free the common homeland from slavery" and therefore to join the Cispadane Confederation, which "opened its arms to the brothers willing to come to this holy purpose".

The seed was sown, and it was to bear good fruit. A few months later, the Confederation was transformed, by popular will, into a unitary State, the Cispadane Republic, and this expanded, a little later, to form the Cisalpine Republic, which was then the immediate generator of the Italian Republic, and therefore of that State, which was called the Kingdom of Italy, and which was the first step towards national unity.

It is not without significance that this seed arose, through the spontaneous virtue of citizens, towards the heart of Italy, in the central region, where the destinies of Italy had been decided so many times in history and where the most sensitive point of the unity of the peninsula was geographically located. In those regions the traditions of municipal liberties had resisted more tenaciously; innovative ideas had spread more rapidly; new parties and new ruling classes had formed more quickly.

The enthusiasm with which the genesis of the Cispadane Confederation was greeted in October 1796 was not a passing blaze, kindled by the imitation of French forms. It responded to a profound conscience and a remote tradition. Buonaparte himself was surprised and admired by it, and in the letters to the Directory, to the ministers, to his generals, written in those days, he did not cease to extol the fine proof of energy and civil virtue of the Cispadane cities. "Here - he wrote - the greatest energy is manifested. A legion is created, one arms oneself, one exalts oneself; the small rivalries disappear, and one wants freedom at any price. I believed that the Lombards were the most patriotic people in Italy, but I am beginning to believe that Bologna, Ferrara, Reggio, Modena surpass them in energy. There is in this country a sacred fire that devours"<sup>3</sup>.

Buonaparte's genius had hit the mark. It was the sacred Italian fire that was lit in the heart of the peninsula, in the most sensitive geographical point for Italian unification. It was that sacred fire that then blazed, with the same conscious virtue and in the same geographical surroundings, in another decisive hour of history, when, with the armistice of Villafranca, in July 1859, the fortuitous path of Italian unity seemed to have suddenly come to an end, and instead the popular will of the citizens of Modena, Reggio, Bologna and Parma, creating the dictatorship of Luigi Carlo Farini, amidst unspeakable enthusiasm, reopened that path and soon after began the triumphal march of national unity. It was that sacred fire which, later, after the horrors and disappointments of the tragic world war, after the unbridled red reaction, in November 1920, stirred the souls of Italians more strongly and more widely than anywhere else with the same conscience and in the same historical context, calling them once again to the virtues of national resistance.

Arrigo Solmi

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<sup>3</sup> Corresp. II, n. 1099, p. 63 (18 October).



## **ON THE MARGIN OF RELATIVISM**

### **Relativism and decadence**

When is humanity great? When does it decline?

The historical example of the dissolution of that mighty organism which was the Roman Empire and of the consequent period of obscurity of civilization universally known as the Middle Ages, leads us, in this hour of turmoil, to recognize analogies between that time and our own and to make some think that we Europeans find ourselves once again on the threshold of a new age of barbarism, after what seemed to us a marvelous age of spiritual splendor and material prosperity.

There is no shortage of prophets of doom and the great crisis of the war now gives greater force of persuasion to their catastrophic arguments.

Only yesterday we heard Guglielmo Ferrero declare that the disorder in the world is growing, that the world war, although it has made it more general and more profound, has not yet brought it to its peak, so that we, after this war, "not having found the strength to rise towards a more stable order, must fall towards a greater disorder".

He finds an eloquent symptom of this greater disorder towards which we are hurtling in the "new philosophical offensive" that Germany, not satisfied with having, with its armies and cannon fire, destroyed the political and social order of Europe from its foundations, is launching against the spiritual order of Western civilization, sending its philosophers to destroy what little of it still remains in our minds.

The main factors in this new offensive are said to be the philosophers of the principle of relativity, Weininger, Einstein, Spengler and other thinkers in vogue today, whose task is to "destroy the universe with imagination".

Well, without taking into account that it is not only Germany that today delights in this game of destruction, but that relativistic philosophies and dissolving theories are found and have been born for some time in all the countries where people think and study (mainly in France and in Italy itself, still so philosophically naive and innocent), one cannot ignore the fact that from the most ancient ages thought, in all its forms of science, art, morality, politics, religion, philosophy, has never been anything else, despite all the illusory appearances to the contrary, than a slow, continuous, obstinate process of dissolution of all beliefs, of all certainties, of all faiths that man has tried to stop from time to time, an undeniable fact and one for which I fully give reason in my book: *Philosophy of Anti-Life* (Lugano - Coenobium Publishing House, 1920).

Yes, the "liquefaction of the universe", as Ferrero calls it, is underway, but not since yesterday, nor since the time of the French Revolution, but, if anything, since the time of Buddha and perhaps even before, indeed since the day when with reflection, with thought, with reasoning, a man tried to "explain the world to himself", a mental operation that he carries out by eliminating differences, that is, by destroying the world. From this point of view, therefore, decadence appears to us not only today, but secular, indeed millenary.

Man is the architect of his own decline and he is so precisely by virtue of that faculty of which he is so proud and by which he is superior to all other beings that live around him.

But are we really sure that this is a decline? I don't think so.

Humanity does not truly decline unless it allows itself to be dragged into exalting the nuclear values (of the nuclei of individuation), into making the values

of life prevail (in the biological sense), into always and everywhere wanting beauty, pleasure, well-being, into seeking wealth and power. Then man deludes himself into thinking he is ascending, and precisely then instead he slides onto the inclined plane of decadence, that is, of spiritual decadence, of decadence from being of reason, from function of thought, from anti-vital principle.

The philosophers of relativity, therefore, and all philosophers in general, those of Germany as well as those of the rest of the world, those of today as well as those of yesterday (Poincaré, for example, does not belong to the post-war period and is not German, I believe), in short, the thinkers who in some way, and all of them in some way do so, contribute to upsetting our spiritual world, to disarranging our faiths, to resolving our vital certainties into irresolvable doubts, do not lead us to disorder, to decadence, but are instead the creators of a new greatness of humanity, of true humanity as a thinking collectivity.

The philosophy of relativity today enjoys such a wide consensus in the world as to arouse the wonder of superficial observers of the human phenomenon, but this consensus appears more than natural and legitimate when one thinks that it responds to a general tendency of the spirits and that it interprets our darkest and deepest needs to dissolve the spectacle of this world so alien to our true nature because it is so irrational. It is the best and most appetizing pasture for our spirits hungry for generalization, fervent with opposition to the partial and therefore unjust and therefore erroneous and therefore bad views and opinions of single individuals, the most desired nourishment for those of our spirits that have always felt fascinated by the idea of God because they have always found in it an antithesis to the idea of the world, that is, to the idea of life, of brigand nuclear competition. To be united and form one, this is the irresistible aspiration of sinfully divided human spirits. Just as when you throw a handful of grain you see pigeons flocking in flight to feed on it greedily, so when you enunciate an idea that has a

profound anti-vital, anti-individual, anti-agonistic content, you see men crowd around it, acclaim it enthusiastically, go mad over it. Universal peace, the League of Nations, the international language, socialism in its noblest and purest forms and, as I have already said, religion, as a purifier and liberator from the yoke of vital necessities, have always found the most enlightened and generous spirits ready to rise into that region of air unbreathable for living beings, which is the true homeland of man.

Let us not laugh, then, at the "worldly" people who flock to applaud Einstein without being mathematicians, just as we did not laugh at the poor fishermen of Galilee who flocked to hear the word of someone who promised them a "kingdom of heaven" so far away and different from that earth where, as living beings, they should have found themselves very well.

Adriano Tilgher, examining the doctrines of contemporary relativists, concludes by considering them as the preparers of a revolution that must change the face of the world, bringing into human society the overthrow of the existing order of things. Thus he explains the negative content of these doctrines and sees in them "the last act of the world crisis". For this reason he also weaves the ingenious little romance of the Spirit that, evolving from itself, acts first in a positive sense, then, unable, due to too much critical maturity, to continue in this direction, turns to negative action: a sick person who tosses and turns in bed with morbid/restlessness, without ever finding rest. The usual linear interpretation of the activity of being, an interpretation commanded by the monistic need of our Reason.

But Reason is one thing and has its methods, Being is another and has its own reality, which may also partly not agree with the methods and needs of Reason.

In fact, Being is Reason and Life, it is duality, it is the conflict of two Wills, one of which wants what we mean by plurality, the other wants what we mean by unity. Reason fights Life, trying to reduce its multiplicity and diversity to unity and identity. This is the drama of Being and this is the specific function of Man.

I know that with these few words I cannot fully justify such an unusual conception of Life and the World, but I do not have the opportunity to dwell on the subject here.

However, it is not difficult to understand that, assuming our existence as a continuous effort to cancel, with generalizing thought tending towards the absolute, the contrary effort of life to always affirm itself as singularity and individuality, the birth and spread of theories and philosophies increasingly inclined towards the devaluation of these distinct individualities and towards the lack of differentiation of the particular points of view that they require (which is what all the relativistic intuitions of the philosophers mentioned above substantially want) is not at all to be considered as a symptom of decay, of decadence, nor as a harbinger of catastrophes or revolutions, but as the slow, gradual, normal and perennial unfolding of that special activity, in which our strange nature as men consists, that is, as beings *of its kind*, unique, extra-natural, placed on a plane completely different and higher than that on which all the others who form the world are found.

In this activity, progressively taking place in ever broader and more comprehensive ideologies, lies the perpetual becoming of our greatness.

Humanity has its own greatness, which is not that of all other creatures, but rather is opposed to that of all other creatures, so that what constitutes decadence for them is instead elevation and perfection for us.

This alleged decadence of humanity, even temporarily brought about by forms of thought that certainly do not favor the establishment of an order in the vital sense, is instead its destiny and is at the same time its purity and its nobility.

This wandering off the well-defined paths of Life, this losing with idealisms, subjectivisms, relativisms the sense of reality, the sense of differences, the sense of an order so necessary to that which wants to be organic, that wants to be something in the midst and against other things, this feeling of being less and less certain, less grounded in its own scientific, moral, political beliefs, less polarized toward the vital purposes so tenaciously pursued by plants and beasts, this feeling of finally becoming more and more disoriented in a universe in which everything is nucleus, this, I say, is its greatness and (whatever road leads there is not a descent, a decadence, but an ascension. A greatness in comparison to which the other, that of power, of magnificence, of dominion, is nothing but a gilded form of bestial misery.

**Silvio Pagni**

### **Relativism and Politics**

Germany in the war used, as everyone knows, many kinds of offensives to obtain the victory she so desired. The peoples who were against her knew during those terrible years, in addition to the military offensive properly so called and that of the destruction of commerce by submarines, an offensive of demoralization, an offensive of disintegration among the Allies, a defeatist offensive, a pacifist offensive, etc. There would be nothing extraordinary if, after the war was lost, Germany itself tried to make up for it, in peace, and to regain the upper hand over its victors with a series of offensives of yet another kind, more subtle and therefore more dangerous and capable of greater success. I, for my part, am not averse to

believing, for example, that a certain work that has been done since the armistice among us and in some foreign countries, by self-styled men of letters and artists to bring back into honor theories and literary and pictorial forms of pure Germanic derivation, tends precisely to this end. It would then be an aesthetic and intellectual offensive, quite clever and which could in time bear fruit. It would be in a certain way the complement of the other offensive, the industrial one, much more evident and whose results can now be observed by everyone.

But if on this point there may still be doubts, there is almost no doubt about an offensive that we will call philosophical, which has been launched in recent times and which seems destined to strike more directly and more deeply at former enemies, if we do not promptly take action against them!

I mean to speak of the introduction that has been made among us and the rapid diffusion which we are witnessing of the doctrine called relativism, founded by a group of Germans and Jews, or German Jews, with Einstein at their head.

I do not have the necessary competence to judge the real value of this doctrine, and therefore I will not even attempt to discuss its principles philosophically. All I could say would be that both its origin and its general character should arouse suspicion in us, we whose clear intelligence would be made to distance us from everything that smacks of abstruse, abstract and dissolving. But since I see how precisely this mental clarity is now more than ever overcome, and in a greater number of Italians than ever, by the ancient servility of our national spirit, not only that, but also how, moreover, even the conceptions of our politics risk being influenced by the new ideas boldly propagated, I believe that some observations can also be made about them, and perhaps with a certain profit, even by that incompetent whom I have confessed to be.

It will be permissible to try in any case.

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I will begin by reporting a small fact, which, if on the one hand seems to deny the suspicion I have raised of a premeditated German-Jewish threat to our intelligence, can demonstrate, on the other, how our intellectuals have perhaps been too quick to attribute to Einstein's theory a greater scope than that intended by the scientist himself. It was reported to me by a friend, a poet and scholar, who, at the time of his conferences in Bologna, had been able to meet and converse with Einstein. This friend told me that, having exposed to the mathematician some doubts about a possible transformation of the metaphysical problem of knowledge following his discoveries, Einstein had not only agreed with him, but had declared "that he was very annoyed that in some principles of an essentially scientific order they had wanted to see principles of pure philosophy, while he himself was aware of the extreme dangers of certain inferences, and felt that he was, in his own right, an absolutist, having just left his special field of study".

And indeed we should be greatly surprised if it were not so. And it is not understood how acute, profound, and sometimes brilliant thinkers can believe that any discovery relating to the constitution and phenomena of the universe, sensible, has the power to modify even minimally the metaphysical concept that we can have of the universe, when we know that that concept is the result of a mere dialectical operation, and therefore independent of everything that is of an empirical and accidental nature. For the thought that investigates, with the methods of logic, the truth, that yearns for the total and absolute knowledge of what is, that tends to the sublime synthesis of the real and the ideal: that considers, in short, the world as its own creation and at the same time as its own substance, the fact that the sensible structure and the mechanical laws of the world, of scientific experience are such and such, has no real importance. Whether the earth turns or stands still, whether space or emptiness exists or does not exist, whether the universe can be said to be finite or infinite or unlimited, are so many things that



can very well support or destroy a religious conception of the universe based on the fables of a sacred book; the philosophical mind will therefore not cease to consider the problem of being as unchanged and invariable in its logical terms, and to work on it in order to resolve it in formulas that are ever clearer and, if one may say so, more absolute, to infinity.

The truth is that a philosophy of the relative is a contradiction in terms, if by philosophy one must understand a vigorous and harmonious construction of the logical mind: if one must understand an intellectual exercise occasioned by the more or less brilliant results of a scientific experience, the word philosophy cannot have any place and must be replaced with another, at will.

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But if this is true philosophically speaking, what can we say of a politics which is based on presuppositions as erroneous as those of a doctrine which first of all denies the very concept of truth? Only anarchy could, perhaps, make such a doctrine its own; and it is precisely anarchy, Bolshevism and chaos that are thought of by those who have made themselves its apostles and propagators among us. (And it is for this reason, and also because the apostles and propagators are almost all old Germanophiles, or neutralists or defeatists, that I initially put forward my supposition that it was nothing but the last weapon of offense of the old enemies.) Every other political party or movement which - tending towards any order - did not reject it with horror, would thereby demonstrate that it is not worthy of living, let alone of asserting itself and developing usefully in the disciplined framework of a civil society. For if it is a fact that each philosophy presupposes a certainty as a point of reference for its speculations, it is equally certain that a very precise truth is the indispensable foundation of political preaching and action, where it is not simply a question of subverting, but also of reconstituting the order and law of a State. And let it be a truth of any kind; as long as it is not strictly subordinated to

the vicissitudes of scientific discoveries, of a universal character; which, if they can modify the idea we have about the mechanics of the world, will never destroy or alter the essential, spiritual, internal concepts on which human faiths, civil religions, the great collective passions for the just, for the good, and also for the beautiful are based and refer to: in short, for everything that men want to achieve, for which they move and fight and suffer and conquer, and for which history is formed.

That is to say that, in our particular case, nothing should influence less - and influence you less - on the positive political conceptions of our time - and especially of our country - than a theory like Einstein's with all its more or less captious, more or less suggestive derivations: each, like that one, of a disintegrating and anarchic essence. It is a commonplace that no society can rest securely if not on absolute principles of human order. Hence, in this regard, one can boldly affirm that if instead of asserting the relativity of time and space (nonsense for our psychological, thinking, intuitive ego) the truth of the Indian cosmological symbol according to which the entire universe rests on the back of an elephant were reconfirmed, this would not shift the terms of the social question in the least, nor could it suggest other means for its solution.

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I have spoken so far in general terms of the incompatibility that must exist between any healthy policy and the very new theory of relativity, which fashion has introduced and parades among us. If I had to express my thoughts on the possibility of any relationship between this doctrine and Fascism in particular, I could be even more peremptory in declaring that, for reasons more evident than ever, this possibility does not exist. Nor do I believe there is any need for a long speech to state the reasons. An essentially Italian party, essentially national, essentially of order, essentially realistic, how could Fascism, in fact, see anything

other than the negation of its own spiritual substratum in that theory of the uncertain (and therefore of the non-Italian), of the indefinite (and therefore of the non-national), of the variable (and therefore of the non-orderable), of the fluid (and therefore of the non-concrete)? To imagine that it could be otherwise would be like admitting that an almost religious passion could be in accord with the smile of doubt and universal skepticism; a design of perfect classical architecture, with a sort of imprecise and variable cinematic figuration.

That, in truth, the doctrine of relativism, in the field of philosophy and practice, leads to nothing but a complete skepticism; just as in that of aesthetics it could only lead to an art of a cinematographic nature. Which means that, seen from this aspect (I am speaking of its spiritual about-assessment), it even lacks the merit of novelty. "Everything is relative": is this not perhaps the adage that each of us has unfortunately heard pronounced by all those who, lacking faith and love, love to escape, in their moral, intellectual and psychological misery, from the very difficult imperatives, certainly, of the absolute?

A part of the world bourgeoisie, and especially the Italian one, cynical, immoral, anarchic - precisely - even before knowing the ideas of the relativists, had chosen that convenient sentence as its own motto.

For Fascism, however, the absolute exists, and cannot not exist. It is this that justifies its existence; it sanctifies its action. It is on this that the principle of the Fatherland rests, the principle of order, the hierarchical principle, the principle of authority; and that of the civil superiority of our people and our Nation. And from this ideal absolute, many real absolutes flow like rivers from a perennial spring. And they are the absolutes that must inform its daily political work. They are also those that the German relativists and their followers in Europe and America would perhaps prefer to make us forget; but Fascism cannot forget them. One of these most accessible absolutes is, for example, that Germany and its allies lost the war

and that we won it; another, that the true borders of Italy are in one place rather than another; a third, that the victory gives Italy certain rights that the world will have to recognize, willingly or unwillingly, etc. I also understand that a nice political relativism would appear to many to be infinitely more useful. But how can it be done?

And if one were to object that in the daily practice of the party such absolutism can contradict the proclaimed fascist realism; that a certain elasticity seems necessary for immediate and particular action; well, not even in this case is it indispensable to refer to the principle of relativity. Those of the old pragmatism are enough. Even better those of the politics of the misunderstood, unattainable, divine Machiavelli, our Italian and Florentine.

They were simple, plain and immutable principles: to know thoroughly the souls of men, who are and always remain the same; and to make use of this science; to look at the end that one proposes rather than quibbling over the means that can help us reach it; to persuade oneself that it is always "more convenient to follow the effective truth of the thing, than the imagination of it", as he wrote.

Everything else – and relativism – is idle talk or a trap.

Whatever the form and mechanism of the universe, man and people are always the same, and their hearts, human problems are always the same; the passions, vices, pains and glories of the earth do not change, nor will they ever change as long as it lasts as it is, or seems to us.

**Ardengo Soffici**

*We publish together the two articles by Pagani and Soffici, which, despite the apparent contradiction, in a certain sense complement each other. One*

*concerns more closely the concrete problems of human action and psychology, the other the essential problems of thought itself.*

## **COLONIAL POLICY**

### **ITALY IN LIBYA**

Italian policy in Libya has been the object of journalistic and parliamentary criticism in recent times. It is almost time to draw conclusions and draw some moral considerations from the fable; for if it is comforting to note that Italian public opinion, reassured by the internal situation, is beginning to take an interest in colonial problems, it is disheartening that the free academy of the incompetent and amateurs in such a delicate matter is tolerated. We must contribute to the formation of a widespread and confident Italian colonial conscience. It is not a question of vulgarizing the instinctive imperialism of the Anglo-Saxons and the French; but of carrying out a work of civilization useful to our fellow countrymen and the natives; of promoting economic collaboration and production; of valorizing the mineral and agricultural resources of the soil, local industries and trade. All that can be done, and could have been done with less expense than that sustained up to now for Libya, will be of enormous benefit to the development of the national spirit; because one never loves or desires one's homeland so ardently as when one is far from it, and yet one recognizes everywhere the imprint of its victorious existence.

#### **Disinterest and incompetence**

In December 1910, in the Chamber, the Hon. Di San Giuliano, minister in the Luzzatti Cabinet, stated: "Italy wants Tripolitania to remain Turkish." History has done justice to that unfortunate phrase; but there are not a few today who secretly and publicly, either out of false, extemporaneous humanitarianism or for

the love of a quiet life, state: "Tripolitania must be left to the Arabs." And why not to the Berbers, age-old and implacable enemies of the Arabs? And then, there is nothing more fallacious than that definition which includes in a single name the various Islamic tribes in conflict and competition with each other. To include, in a general way, the Libyan situation in the grandiose movement of the Islamic revolt would be exquisitely anti-historical; and, as I have said, it would also mean the secret desire to put an end to a problem which disturbs the sleep of the small bourgeois homeland. We must, therefore, take an interest in our colony with an ever-vigilant sense of reality: all the more so since the socialists and communists are interested in it, even too much. The memory of the humiliating restitution of the prisoners of Misurata is recent, made, by express declaration of the Arab leaders, not to the Government, but to the Bolsheviki of Italy; the overbearing and malicious attitude of the delegates, of Garian, excellent friends of the subversive deputies, is recent; and yet the Government sends the defeatist Hon. Treves to Libya for the investigation into military expenditure! It is not a question of power, but of dignity; not of pride, but of modesty.

By forming an Italian colonial conscience, these "colmi" will become impossible. Before people started talking about Libya again, in Italy they were even unaware (I mean the public that reads newspapers and deals with politics) of the limits of our dominion. A people with strong nerves does not fear the truth; and for this reason the list of small and large shames, the naked and crude exposure of current conditions, must not depress but rather temper our political instinct. Italy is in Libya; we must not forget this, nor must we forget that in Libya there are excellent Italians, devoted to the country, industrious and tenacious colonizers, who must not be abandoned to the surprises of a policy without directives and without coherence. The director of Turkish customs said to Domenico Tumiatì: "If those who come spend half a billion in Tripolitania, they will be able to collect,

within a year, four hundred percent; if he spends fifty million there, he will lose them without hope." Now, Italy has lost, in Tripolitania, fourteen billion and many men: this too must not be forgotten.

### **The agreement of Fonduk ben Gascir**

The attitude of the representatives of official Italy towards the Libyan Arabs is the most pleasant thing one can imagine. We are not going to review the dozen governors who succeeded one another in a decade: it is not the men that count, but their policy, which is, unfortunately, what the state of mind of the nation, the financial and military means permit. It is not clear whether in the Colony there is a state of war or the most delightful calm. Tripoli is surrounded by barbed wire; but the Hon. Venino returns to Rome happy and enthusiastic, admiring the "marvelous landscapes", the coach services, and other literary reminiscences. The offensive measures are directed only against the metropolitans, and precisely against those who do not want to give up the right to see with their own eyes and to reason with their own brain. There is talk of the occupation of Misurata, an agricultural, commercial and military center indispensable to Italy; and here a certain press accuses the Government of joking with the possibility of a colonial war and threatens that the Arabs will occupy Azizia: almost as if this internal locality has an exceptional political or strategic importance. Therefore, real defeatism is being done, speculating on quietism and incompetence; while the Government is quick to deny and leave things as they are. The penultimate Governor, Comm. Mercatelli, was replaced for a negligible little police operation against the rebel smugglers; while his fault was, if anything, in his reluctance to favor the healthy and spontaneous forces of the Italian citizenship and to remove the life of the Colony from the absurd tyranny of the distant Government. He was the victim of an

episode that does him credit; and today he is remembered with relative sympathy even by the natives, precisely for his firmness.

This indecision, this contradiction between the truth and the official interpretation, this "day by day" policy is the result of the Fonduk ben Gascir agreement, concluded in May 1919, in which General Tarditi, head of the Political Office, certainly did not show any shrewdness. That agreement meant the imposition of the now famous Libyan Statute, which came to shake not only the prestige of Italy in the Libyan regions, but also that of France and England in the neighboring colonies. Because colonial politics does not tolerate certain absurd isolations: being at the head of the Islamic movement (and precisely in the region where the Arabs are most backward and degenerate!), teaching the French and the English how to govern the colonies, are ridiculous demagogic utopias. It is much more humane to give the subject peoples the great railways that cross Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, the great roads, the factories and the ports; in short, to educate with civilization a national conscience, which can be discussed when it is able to create its own legal, administrative and political organs, in a less rudimentary form and more worthy of the modern world. It is worth noting that, while negotiations were taking place at Fonduk ben Gascir with the rebels - led by Ramadan Sheteui and the Coobar brothers - in Tripoli there were eighty thousand soldiers, returning from the trenches, who asked only to fight. It was the cunning of the Arabs that dragged out the negotiations for six months, until the hot season, when the colonial war, due to the lack of wells, becomes very difficult. And on June 1, 1919, peace was concluded, a peace without value for Italy, which did not receive any serious guarantees, which lost the friendship and support of France and England, and which cost a million for the celebrations in favor of the Arabs. The investigation should be entrusted to people more competent than the Hon. Treves and Senator Bellini, excellent mayor of Forlì and republican expelled because of the laticlavio;



and it should review the documents of the agreement of Fonduk ben Gascir, investigating, first of all, whether the dignity of Italy has always been respected.

### **The Menzinger Government**

With the agreement of Fonduk ben Gascir, the Arabs were left with many thousands of rifles, cannon, machine guns and the rich supplies of ammunition that our garrisons had had to abandon during the retreat of 1915 and that Eastern and Western contraband had increased considerably. On the other hand, the Italians, locked within the walls of Tripoli, could no longer send troops into the interior, nor carabinieri to maintain order there. The Statute sanctioned freedom of thought and assembly, and the Arabs used it for their anti-Italian propaganda, in which it was easy for ambitious leaders to sow bad seeds in the souls of the masses, the great majority of whom were illiterate and therefore unprepared for the conscious exercise of these civil rights. The leaders themselves were generally men of little culture, who spoke at most a little French, and had nothing but their personal prestige; Ramadan was a shepherd, not even endowed with real personal courage and sure only of his own stubbornness. Therefore the generosity of the Government is very comical, lavishing honors on the leaders, to ingratiate themselves with them, and granting the people too many liberties, to escape the obligation of educating them. When, about two months after the agreement, Governor Menzinger landed in Tripoli, the situation was very difficult. It is enough to remember the events of Nalut, where Major Sascaro was held prisoner with some soldiers because a visit from the commander of the troops, Colonel Mezzetti, had given the Caimacan, Chalifa ben Ascar, the suspicion that Italy wanted to reoccupy that place by force; the events of Garian, where the Coobar brothers had some officers and soldiers assigned to the construction of a road arrested at night and locked them up in the castle of Garian after having insulted and mistreated

them. But in Misurata, where Ramadan Sheteui was the lord, worse things were happening. The zaptiè (mounted Arab carabinieri) who served in our ranks, when they went on leave to Misurata, were flogged in the public square and often held back by force. A poor old Arab woman, guilty of providing some modest service to an Italian family, was caught and hanged in the public square: and her thirteen-year-old son was forced to bury her with his own hands. Major Galliano, riding his motorcycle from the city of Misurata to the sea, was attacked and wounded in the head. The Turkish flag was flying over the villa in Scingran, owned by Ramadan; and the bandit had the impudence to invite Major Galliano to lunch there, who naturally did not accept.

While this was happening, Baron Menzinger, faithful to the Statute, sent posters to Misurata for the political elections, which he intended to call as soon as possible; but Ramadan Sceteui had a proclamation posted in which he invited the population to distrust and swear hatred towards the Italians. Almost at the same time, the age-old disagreements between the Orfella and the Misuratini were rekindled; a true medieval "feud" which culminated with the killing of Ramadan Sceteui, which occurred in August. The situation was anything but favorable to us; and the garrison of Misurata was removed; but unfortunately the military authorities were not far-sighted enough and 14 officers with 150 soldiers, stationed in Sirte, remained in the hands of the rebels. These prisoners, completely abandoned by the Government, went through very painful days, especially when Ramadan was killed, since the Misurata people saw in this the Italian instigation. Our policy had therefore reached a dead end, and oscillated between the desire for conciliation and the terrible logic of armed retaliation. To complete the picture, one must take into account Russian Bolshevism and the sympathy that Lenin met in Libya for the help given in Asia Minor to the Kemalists. Meanwhile, France and

England, more amazed than offended, observed the acrobatics of our colonial policy. to which one cannot deny, at least, the originality.

### **The Government of Mercatelli**

For all these reasons, and for the inopportune interference of the central government, Menzinger was forced to resign. His successor, Mercatelli, assumed power while an event of great political importance was taking place: the killing of Ramadan Sceteui. It was a favorable moment for the reoccupation of Misurata; but Mercatelli, an excellent mayor of the city of Tripoli, animated by the best intentions of purging the Colony and of administrative economies, did not have the makings of a great politician. His errors were largely of a moral nature: he isolated himself from the indigenous population and from the Italian colony, he tightened the regime of censorship and espionage, he converted Tripoli into a large police headquarters. If, for example, he is credited with having chased out of Tripoli the socialist organizer Franciosi, who was plotting against Italy with the Tripoli nationalists led by Otman el Ghizani, director of the *Linà el Tarabolsi* (The Tripolino Banner), he is also to blame for having removed from the Colony old officials, who knew the area well and had transplanted their homes, families and interests there; for having prevented the free action of political currents of a national nature; for having punished with repatriation those officials who, in the absence of war action, improvised themselves, in the Roman way, as farmers and land reclaimers. Despite these unpardonable excesses, Mercatelli gave an example, on several occasions, of a firm and dignified policy.

During Mercatelli's government, in April 1921, the Fascio di Combattimento was formed in Tripoli, which today has more than three hundred members, mostly ex-combatants, and has successfully begun some interesting cooperative and trade union experiments. It is hoped and possible that, despite the aversion of Ghizani

and the other rabble-rousers, these fascist organizations will succeed in enlisting Arab workers as well, thus opening the way to a practical and productive understanding. The Fascists of Tripoli has its own weekly, entitled, precisely, *The Facist*, which defends the good name and interests of Italy, more than, for example, the Italian-Arab daily newspaper, more Arab than Italian, *The New Italy*. However, during Mercatelli's government, Tripoli Fascism encountered no small obstacles. State employees were subject to hierarchies and disciplinary punishments; the others, merchants, private employees, workers, were kept in check by the famous article 11, by virtue of which the Governor can repatriate metropolitan citizens in a jiffy. The newspaper was often published with large blank spaces, due to the trembling government censorship, good at casting dirty looks only at its fellow countrymen.

On the whole, Mercatelli's government was the lesser evil, but it was not up to the situation; its policy was also made of compromises, expedients, momentary stratagems. It was the vaunted peaceful, economic policy, which is still continued, because, it is said, that is what the country wants: a merciful lie, because it is ridiculous to talk about economic collaboration when no contact with the inhabitants of the interior is possible; when beyond Tagiura the coast is in the hands of the rebels; when even in the areas traversed by trains safety is very relative.

## **Trends and findings**

Governor Volpi, like Mercatelli, continues the work of economic revival of the city of Tripoli, but does not seem concerned about the rest of the Colony. In the first days of power, he left room for some vague hope of reoccupying the coast; but the high and low voices aroused by that news in Italy induced the Governorate and the Ministry to the most ferocious denials. It is presumable that, to implement any

policy and to display his excellent qualities of shrewdness, Volpi thinks of reintroducing the divide and conquer, taking advantage of the rivalries between the tribes; but the Arabs are beginning to understand the game. Meanwhile, the Arab gendarmes push up to the fences of Tripoli, demand taxes from the fellahs, like so many Emilian league leaders, shoot at our farmers, intimidate our officials. There is talk of a coalition of the Tripoli hinterland with the Cyrenaican one; and the movement would start right from that Cyrenaica where we have granted a very liberal Statute, and established a Parliament over which the tricolour and the crescent fly. While the rebels are subjecting themselves to compulsory conscription to be ready for defense or offence, in Tarhuna the Grand Senussi Sidi Idriss has been invited to make a trip to Tripolitania, and the Grand Senussi has accepted! One of the facts that most rightly worry the Italian colony is the threat of stripping Tripolitania of the marvelous Eritrean askaris, who have given so many proofs of courageous loyalty to the great distant Italy. The Hon. Venino, in his recent and diplomatic visit to Tripoli, stated that the Eritrean battalions are “instruments of war”, but have no use whatsoever in peaceful Libya. If the Hon. Venino, instead of touring Tripoli and the adjacent oasis by car, had pushed a little further towards the east or towards the south, or had set out, alone, on foot, across the desert sands, among a ragged, distrustful and hostile crowd, he would know what it means to suddenly meet, in solitude, or in company more painful than solitude, one of these admirable fighters, with his musket slung over his shoulder, erect in his body, clean in his white uniform, proudly wearing a medal for valor on his chest, and to hear himself greeted in Italian.

Two events that have opened the hearts of Italian residents to the best hopes have been, in recent times, the visit of the Crown Prince, and that of the Undersecretary of the Colonies, the Hon. Venino. But the first was a parade of no political importance, in which the various Caimacans who came to pay homage

had the opportunity to see Tripoli again and to renew contact with their brothers in the city; the other was a continuous contradiction. If the Hon. Venino went to Tripoli to lay the foundations for a great economic action, he should have also taken into account the political conditions that make this peaceful penetration possible or not. One can speak of economic collaboration and expansion when private capitalists are given the guarantee that the State defends their assets and their lives.

Governor Volpi has shown that he takes private initiatives into due consideration, he has begun to remove from Tripolitania the colossal iniquitous police trappings; but this must not mean that the State loses interest in the colony and allows itself to be replaced by the citizens. For this reason Fascism asks the Government for a dignified policy that re-establishes on the coast and in the points necessary for our agricultural, commercial and military interests, the signs of Italian occupation; that makes effective economic collaboration with the natives possible; that inserts the life of the Colony more intimately into that of the Mother Country, removing from the Ministry of the Colonies the attributions that can be absorbed by the other departments; de-bureaucratizing colonial policy and a good sign is the suppression of many offices at the Ministry of Palazzo Chigi and preparing the day in which Italian emigration will be able to usefully turn to the fifth shore, sanctified by so much blood and so many sacrifices.

**Francis Meriano**

I believe I should add some observations to the examination of the Libyan situation. Senator Mosca's interpellation to the Chamber for life (5 December last) has particularly drawn the Government's attention to Cyrenaica and the inapplicability of the Regime Treaty. This inapplicability does not derive only from the lack of obedience of the Arab leaders to Sidi Idriss, although this

rebellion against the authority of the Grand Senussi, which is above all of a religious nature, gives the measure of the political tension in Cyrenaica; but it derives above all from some grotesque and bizarre clauses of the agreement itself, such as the coexistence of the armed occupation forces with the Arab camps. Governor De Martino died before seeing his dream of Italian-Arab economic collaboration destroyed; and yet how many are fighting over his succession, as if unaware of the gravity of the situation! The political value of the Regime Treaty is therefore not superior to that of the Treaty of Fonduk ben Gascir; and the trip to Tripolitania of the Grand Senussi will certainly not have the effect of placating the rebels. Even if we admit the sincerity of Sidi Idriss, the exponent of the Islamic revolt in Libya is no longer him, but Ahmed Mraied, the leader of the Tar-huna, awarded some Italian commendations for having contributed with the Orfella to the killing of Ramadan Sceteui, leader of the Misuratini.

In this state of affairs, the measure adopted by Count Volpi and Mayor Hassuna Pasha to reduce travel fares for groups takes on a humorous meaning. The previous governor tried in every way to prevent the landing of troublemakers, Count Volpi invites all of Italy to... Tripoli city.

On the contrary, the creation of the Italian-Arab Trade Union and the facilities for the Fighters' Cooperatives are highly praiseworthy initiatives; but to make them feasible, Italian capital must be guaranteed with a dignified political action, and land must be procured, legislating on Islamic mortmain, compiling statistics on rural property and establishing the necessary agricultural and land credits. Otherwise, Italian politics will not rise above ordinary municipal administration; and the Arabs will be authorized to repeat the words addressed by one of their brothers to the Italian judge who sentenced him to six years of imprisonment for rape: "And do you believe that in six years the Italians will still be in Tripoli?"

**F. M.**

**The attitudes and works of the C. G. d. L**

**From the occupation of factories to the collaborationist vote**

The reformist assault, launched by the confederal General Staff against the so-called nullity of the maximalist Party Leadership, found its first and foreseen stopping point in the intransigent vote of the National Socialist Council. With this, one must not consider the aggressive spirit of the attackers completely broken and tamed and the position of the attacked secure and strengthened; we are only faced with another pause in the long and exhausting skirmish that is being fought within Italian socialism. While waiting for a more decisive frontal attack or some other flanking maneuver that will exempt the commanded defenders of the leadership stronghold from the thankless obligation of an unfelt resistance, we can pause to examine the various phases of the workers' movement of recent times, grasping its most clamorous and divergent manifestations.

**Counter-revolutionary origins.**

The General Confederation of Labor, the "maximum workers' organization", as the trade union opposition usually ironically called it at first, has always enjoyed, from 1905, the time of its constitution, up to the present day, unlimited consideration in the bulk of public opinion and within the official classes and organs of our political life. Nine-tenths of its strength are due exclusively to the authority voluntarily conferred upon it, with truly singular zeal and diligence, by the valorization of the daily press, by the credit lavished rather than granted by all bourgeois governments and by the spirit of adaptation and imitation of the remaining enormous number of bourgeois and proletarian audiences. The intrinsic power of the number of the organized, the real and direct trust in the organizers,



the modest personal qualities of some of the latter, are all second-order elements that have an almost negligible value. The strength of the Confederation is a purely reflected force. The phenomenon is easily explained when one thinks of the desolate insufficiency that dominates the ruling spheres of the Socialist Party, of the weakness, the cowardice, the masochism that afflicts our political bourgeoisie and then, above all, when one remembers the counter-revolutionary characteristics that the Confederation has immediately assumed in Italy. In fact, it succeeded the Secretariat of the Resistance, directed by intransigents and trade unionists, and was christened by the fear of the moderates and the senile anger of the democrats in the aftermath of the general strike of 1904, the first sincere political movement of the whole that can record the history of the Italian Socialist Party due to the will and influence of Arturo Labriola, who settled in Milan with his Avant-garde to humiliate the petty bourgeois pride of Filippo Turati.

In fact, the Confederation of Labour, in all the political events that have occurred in recent years, has remained faithful to the role entrusted to it by official democratic Italy: that is, it has been able to contribute to the maintenance of the status quo by opposing any institutional change when circumstances allowed it, it has fueled all the category egoisms and all the regional privileges of the proletariat, it has fornicated with all the slums of plutocracy, it has prevented the formation in the masses of a moral and heroic conscience, capable of pushing them on the path of courage and sacrifice, it has - with its polite and therefore feared demagogic threats - imposed on the country the narrow policy of staying at home, suffocating any broader breathing space in the world. In a word, it has been, from the union and revolutionary point of view, an instrument of social conservation, and from the point of view of exclusively internal politics, a coefficient of national corruption.

**A usurped fame.**

Thanks to certain frank or supposedly frank attitudes, to certain disdainful gestures and to a constant tactic of arrogance, arbitrariness and cynicism followed throughout its life, the spirit of independence and moderation of the Confederation has always been exalted and its leaders have always been portrayed by complacent newspapers, in a mood of flattery, as models of wisdom and sobriety. This is a usurped reputation that it is time to contest. The generals and captains of the Confederation have always cantankerously, only when a simple examination of the situation showed them the impossibility of victory or the difficulties of the battle; in essence when there was something to dare and some unknown to face. But when the storm of popularity and ephemeral success has swelled the sails of his pompous vessel, the helmsmen have always submitted, in absolute passivity, to the truculence of the crew, without bothering to ask in which port they intended to anchor. And when the vessel has struck some mine or run aground in the shallows of some capsized situation, the general staff has rushed to take cover, attributing the accident to the obstinacy and inexperience of others and exhibiting their own hindsight.

The agility and dexterity of the confederal leaders have always prevented a fair and exact evaluation of this custom of theirs; but it is no less true for this. Let us try to recall some moments of the confederal activity to support this judgment of ours.

### **The neutral-patriotism of the leaders**

During the period of neutrality, when the work of the interventionists was limited to the efforts of a few nuclei and when the refractoriness of the great majority of the country to any generous idea and any male purpose was evident, the confederals were the most spirited in their vile and perfidious preaching. But when our minorities succeeded in awakening and towing the national soul, hurling

it against the resistance of bourgeois and triple-minded Italy, the oppositions immediately vanished; no concrete attempt was staged and the sporadic ones attempted here and there were veiledly disavowed. Perhaps because of a well-understood spirit of patriotic civic spirit deeply felt? Not at all. In homage only to the natural tendency to opportunism and passivity. For the four years of the national war the position of the confederal leaders was in truth rather uncomfortable; but the resources provided by duplicity and cunning were never lacking. There was a large group of so-called neutral-patriots who knew how to alternate intrigues and ceremonies at the Mobilization Committees with skillful defeatist propaganda among the exonerated masses, depending on the war events; the double game worked perfectly, managing to simultaneously save internationalist virginity, the skin of the mandarins of low and high power and the political and trade union fortunes.

In the aftermath of the armistice, the Confederation tried in part to direct all the impatience and exuberance of the impending Bolshevik movement towards a possibilist objective. There was the timid Buozzi project, in favor of a Constituent Assembly; but it was submerged by the muddy waves of the most scarlet extremism that came upon it. On this occasion too, the leaders - those leaders to whom all the virtues of iron-fisted leaders are attributed - gave up and slavishly submitted to the arrogant will of the masses that had suddenly come to swell the collected ranks of the organization. Buozzi himself forgot about his fundamentally republican project and within the reformist Olympus he began to air Leninism, fantasizing very seriously about Turati, the next president of the Italian Soviets, and about Treves, the people's commissar for the interior.

The scoundrel work of denigration and persecution of the working class element, guilty of having been interventionists or of having accepted the fact of war with serenity, and the systematic sabotage of all fascist or patriotic

demonstrations, when they did not have direct and open instigators in the confederates as in Liguria and Lombardy, were always complacently tolerated by all the austere champions of freedom and law.

### **D'Aragona sells smoke abroad.**

An episode that is worth establishing the accuracy and justice of our criticism is the one in which D'Aragona was the protagonist when he went to an International Trade Union Convention held in London in June 1919; the general secretary of the Confederation indulged in such a rosy and optimistic illustration of the Italian political moment, he spoke of a potential revolution, of imminent decisive gestures, of masses ready, of perfect revolutionary preparation... so much so as to induce the English Labor Party and the French trade unionists to join an international demonstration that would have served at least as a spiritual aid and comfort to the Italian proletariat, determined to break all hesitation at the first fortuitous occasion.

Even the tone of the official organ, *Union Battles*, was very proud and sustained at that time; it spoke, albeit through the mouth of a clear-sighted temperament like the late Hon. Giuseppe Bianchi, a language of authentic revolutionary lyricism.

In short, those of the confederates who did not believe in the revolution by virtue of their public and physical virtues were lulled into the hope of a transfer of power to Karoly. We are willing to grant the confederate leaders all the extenuating circumstances provided by the psychological state of the masses, by the progress of Bolshevism in the East and by the state of disintegration in which our country found itself; but if certain illusions could be cultivated in the minds of superficial politicians or unaware masses, they should not find a refuge in the minds of leaders who have always insisted on considering themselves cold and far-

sighted calculators. The attack and burning of Avanti! and the failure of the international strike of 20-21 July were the episodes that overshadowed the bright hopes of some leaders there and then; but the triumph on paper of 16 November brought even the most prudent back into the enormous number of the deluded and the illusionists.

### **Prone to the tactic of defeat....**

The summer of 1920, pregnant with tumultuous agitations and typically subversive demonstrations from the Ancona revolt to the deplorable "get out of Albania!" did not find the Quaglinos, the Bianchis, the D'Aragonas determined and ready for an open repudiation of what was the Cadornian and defeatist tactic of "shoulder attacks"; but only trembling and doubtful officials, terrified by the thought of assuming precise concrete responsibilities, but also incapable of escaping the seductions of the applause of the demagogic crowds.

The occupation of the factories is the masterpiece of confederal politics, a politics made of demands, of delays, of reservations, without clear objectives, without precise lines, a politics of neo-Malthusian people eager to savor to the full the cup of propitiatory popularity and at the same time worried about the consequences deriving from certain male and fruitful gestures.

No one has ever bothered to establish the initial responsibility for that temporary revolution in progress that delighted Italy from September 1st to 27th and that was the cause of so many misfortunes to the solidity of our economy. This is a very natural fact that occurs every time an event ends well or ends in nothing; the causes are sought and the guilty parties are hunted down only when things end tragically and blood cements and makes the news ugly.

But for our investigation, to demonstrate that the famous sense of responsibility, which should be according to the unofficial bourgeois of

confederalism a bit like the sixth sense of trade union leaders, exists only when there is nothing to lose and nothing else to do, it is worth dwelling on this event that Giolitti's cold optimism resolved in the most evanescent form.

### **Responsibility for the occupation of factories.**

Politicians, governments, the press, public opinion, all have always attributed the occupation of the factories to a spontaneous movement of the Milanese workers, which was automatically followed by the workers of Lombardy and other regions. The Confederation of Labor and even the Federation of Metallurgical Workers itself, would have been surprised by the movement, would have ignored it and finally suffered, trying as usual to dominate it and to channel it into less dangerous and extreme ways. The truth is only in this last part; in fact, when the agitation reached its usual fatal conclusion (or insurrection or capitulation), the confederal leaders realized the dangers they were facing and with the excuse of the perplexity shown by the communists of the Party Management not willing to take the reins of the movement that had become political, reduced the struggle that was supposed to, in the minds of the crowds who had started the gesture, lead to the transfer of property, to a simple means for the achievement of a legislative postulate. In this contingency the task of wise moderator of his own and others' audacities and impatience was entrusted to D'Aragona who had not previously compromised himself in this matter. (The division of the parties within the confederal general staff is always very intelligent and profitable).

But if the solution was in tune with the immediate interests of the country - because only temporarily would a victorious revolutionary attempt have been successful - and with the mediated interests of the workers' organization, this does not exclude the responsibility for the initiative, which was exclusively that of the Metallurgical Federation; it is presumed that its secretary, the Hon. Buozzi, did not

keep his colleagues on the Confederal Executive Committee in the dark about his intentions, so that the highest workers' organization is also involved in the same responsibility. To support the assertion that it was the Metallurgical Federation that pre-ordered the movement throughout Italy, a small episode of detail that also has its probative value can be useful: on September 3, a day or two after the occupation of the Lombard factories, on the chimneys of the auxiliary factories in the Pistoia mountains - S. Marcello, Bardalone, Fornaci di Barga, and other internal sites of the Apennines - there were already waving not improvised rags, but large red flags with the emblem of the hammer and sickle embroidered in black on the background together with the writing: Federation of Metalworkers, Section of...". Evidently, since they were flags of the same size and of the same type, flying in opposite locations, it is easy to presume that they had been made by the provincial or regional body, in obedience to the prescriptions of the central Fiom.

Since that fantastic movement had profound repercussions on national, economic and political life, and since the conflicts that bloodied Italy were partly born from the impunity granted in that period to the criminality of the organized, it is right that the tender admirers of our confederate personalities also take into account this sublime and ignored glory.

### **The Livorno shooting correction**

Once all the illusions that had flourished in the naive proletarian souls during the autumn of 1920 had fallen, and the fascist counteroffensive had taken shape, the Confederation of Labor had effectively returned to being an element of moderation and responsibility. But it was a responsibility that was not at all instinctive, felt, voluntary, but only imposed by circumstances; well, that human phenomenon that in vulgar terms is called fear and cowardice, instead was

qualified, thanks to a certain ease of the protagonists, with flattering euphemisms destined to increasingly accredit their political charm.

The Livorno Congress marked another stopping point for that able, composed and authoritative demagoguery that had also dominated the spirit of the confederals in several circumstances; the correction of aim was accentuated by the firm opposition, expressed mainly by Baldesi, towards the communist minority.

It is worth noting that if the men of the Confederation are politicians full of haughtiness and charm in their contacts with the bourgeois adversaries (thus managing with these amiable qualities of theirs to make themselves feared and loved), towards their internal opponents they are equally despotic, irascible and arrogant.

### **The resources of a regulation.**

This custom of theirs, which harmonizes with their fatherly temperament, has, therefore, procured them all the most notable successes, so that it is natural that they do not decide to change their system; especially when they know that they are armored by a regulation that authorizes them to a real dictatorial regime and protects them from any legal attack. Universal suffrage and the abolition of secret diplomacy are for these autocratic leaders two completely democratic obsessions whose application is easily and willingly dispensed with.

The union activity of the Confederation in this last year, having rejected every revolutionary tactic, has thus been limited to a simple and bureaucratic assistance given by its officials in the main defense agitations, agitations that have almost all ended in defeat. The general strike in Genoa in support of the localized struggle of the metalworkers, which ended in a pitiful compromise whose paternity belongs to Buozzi, and the national strike of the wool workers, are two bright gems that shine in the opaque confederal firmament.



In addition to this strictly formal assistance, the Confederation has undertaken a work of legislative enhancement and consolidation; a special Office operates within the Secretariat, directed by one of the mandarins recently appointed to the honor of management, but without much success.

### **The surrogates of revolution.**

The investigation into the industries which, together with the control over the companies, was supposed to be one of the surrogates of the cooperative management of the occupied and then evacuated factories, was one of the social cornerstones most insistently claimed by the Confederation. The insistence to obtain the start of the works is related to the mocking criticisms with which the communist press and the Trade Union Committee adhering to the Party Executive, judged the successes of the confederal action.

Maintaining membership in the Amsterdam International, the one described as "yellow" by Moscow's supporters, was another reason for violent opposition from the communist minority, but on this point the reformists found themselves in good and numerous company, because the major foreign organizations, especially those with which the Confederation had in the past or reactivated after the war relations and contacts, did not at all allow themselves to be lured by the insinuating Russian pressures.

A particular opposition, initiated by the Italian Trade Union, the so-called Borghian one, outside the official ranks, but also spreading within those controlled by the Confederation, has given the reformists quite a hard time: it is the refusal to pay the contributions for the Social Insurance, whose funds are partly subsidized by the State and by the industrialists. This type of resistance seemed easy to all the proletarians, who as good Italians reluctantly pay contributions to their organizations; and when they decide to do so, they do so only because of... the

subjection that those permanent punitive expeditions that the Internal Commissions launch in all the factories where they have been able to impose their domination instill in them. Then there was a deeper and fairly plausible reason for this opposition; it falls within the broad framework of illusions and disappointments that have surrounded the life of the workers in recent years. Was it possible a few months ago, when the minds of the marketeers were still clouded by the fumes of the Leninist hangover, to ask them to pay a few lira - administered by a Consortium of masters and officials of the bourgeois government to provide for their future when their imminent domination in a regime of prosperity and power had been guaranteed? But why give up today the daily liter to keep tomorrow's egg warm, when the bourgeois hen was there, ready to be plucked? From the simplicity of the simplistic crowds one could not expect any different reasoning.

### **The latest collaborationist pronouncement.**

The political news of the last few days has brought back to the forefront of discussion the tendencies and the so-called realizing wills of confederal reformism. The democratic and bourgeois newspapers - those of Nitti, Giolitti and Bonomi and the numerous others also of various colors, which ask nothing more than that the men of the Socialist Party shine their shoes with the same zeal as their brothers in permanent active service - have been filling their columns for two weeks with interviews with great, mediocre and small men of the collaborationist fraction, with articles, notes, chronicles, revelations, all publications intended to make possible the magical event: the direct or indirect collaboration of the Socialist Party in the government of the country.

On this occasion the zealous go-betweens indulge in all sorts of presumptuous predictions and judgments, judgments and predictions that are always destined to receive prompt and resounding denials. It is said, for example,

that the effective force at the disposal of the party is provided by the Confederation, while the members would only form a thin cover army; so that the denunciation of the famous alliance pact between the two organisms would place the party in isolation. We do not know what the real forces of the Confederation are today, because for some time now it has been rather negligent in this regard; a statistic that appeared in a recent issue of *Union Battles* with a list of the aid given by Italy to starving Russia puts the sum at 2,030,000 members; but there is no doubt that if the party must fear the authority and prestige that the confederals enjoy with the government, parliament, the press, the industrial classes and the country taken as a whole, the confederals cannot delude themselves about their personal influence with the working masses.

#### **Generals isolated from the army.**

There is no doubt that when the bitter propaganda of the communists does not take hold, the will of the socialist party reigns supreme, mainly that of *The Forward!* The influence of the confederates is, as we said before, entirely reflected and limited to the general staffs; the great mass of the workers' army, when it does not completely ignore the union official, distrusts and despises him. The weakness of this reciprocal position is not ignored by the contenders, who, also for this reason, will never dare to translate their threats into action and give vent to their own partisan resentments.

Undoubtedly, however, even if the pronouncement of the reformist part and of the confederal elite is temporarily destined to failure, it still constitutes an element of undeniable value in the crisis that troubles the socialist party. It means the sunset of all the red dawns that arose prematurely on the political horizon of our country and represents the definitive return to the flat and banal practice, typical of bourgeois democracy.

It is doubtful whether in the new field where the Italian Socialist Party is reaping again it will still be possible to gather some fruit capable of satisfying the palates of its card-carrying servants. In any case, the fate of this party, which after having shaken on high all the torches of hope and courage is forced to retrace the old paths of "gradual conquests" and legislative reformism is indeed tragic.

**All damned to the same fate.**

From the occupation of the factories - "one less boss, one more red flag" - so the literary formula that blossomed in the hour of collective madness - to the collaborationist vote of the Executive Council of the Confederation of Labor, there is a truly enormous gap. To bridge the abyss between the recent bright past and the current greyness, the lying fatalistic assertions of the intransigents are not enough, nor are the polemical subterfuges of the reformists, who on the one hand attribute all the failures to the revolutionaries, while on the other they try to load the burden of the old ministerial and ministeriable aspirations onto the shoulders of Fascism.

None of those who, for base love of popularity, lied or allowed others to lie, will be able to escape the grip of a just destiny. The Socialist Party, through all its nuances and with all its fractions, is therefore in block tied to the long chain of its errors and its faults. All, right or left, are ineluctably destined to the common defeat of their own principles and their own applications; all are equally damned to an inglorious future of uncertainty and inertia.

**Caesar Rossi.**

## **IN THE WORLD OF BOOKS**

### **PUBLISHERS, AUTHORS AND BOOKSELLERS**

More than one newspaper and some popular culture periodicals have recently dealt with the cost of books and their distribution. And this is to be

ascribed to great fortune because in Italy certain topics almost never interest public opinion which appears only greedy for sensational news or political and worldly frivolities.

We can therefore attempt to say something on the subject that has not been said or conveniently clarified by other writers, in the innocent hope that, from today to tomorrow, it will be possible to arouse around the small Italian publishing and book world that minimum amount of attention that is indispensable in order to set about straightening out many excessively distorted current ideas and to arouse the desire for solid reforms in favor of the culture of the people and national education.

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Paper has been talked about as a major contributor to the cost of books, and there is no denying that this is true.

An investigation into the national paper mills and related traffic for almost seven years now could perhaps reveal interesting background information to the country and explain the reason for certain fabulous prices. There was a time when paper that before the war cost thirty or forty lire per quintal cost, again for each quintal, seven or eight hundred lire.

A pleasant boss who wanted to proportionally increase the prices of the editions, would have had to set at forty lire a booklet that a few years ago would have cost two lire.

And today, when paper has decreased somewhat, its price is still so high that the Government itself, when it wanted to poke its nose into publishing affairs and provide for price controls with the decree of 17 May 1921, ended up... increasing them.

Evidently he did not want to think that he could reduce the cost of school and non-school books by half by reducing or even abolishing the customs duty on

paper, which is currently 18.75 gold lire per quintal, or, at the current exchange rate, approximately 90 lire.

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We have spoken about printers and their rates, which certainly influenced the cost of books. Before the war, a printer earned 5 lire or, at most, 5.85 a day; today, including everything, it comes to 35 lire a day.

If the increase in volumes had occurred only in proportion to the printing rates, a two lire booklet would have to cost at least twelve!

Mention was also made of the postal rates that had become prohibitive. The State made a poor deal with this increase and damaged everyone; but if it aimed to reduce the circulation of books it achieved its goal well.

To send a book weighing 155 grams, including packaging, you need forty cents; the same amount is needed for registered mail, if you want to be approximately certain that the book won't get lost along the way: all in all, eighty cents. Which means that if the publisher pays, he cancels out his profit and in some cases even loses; if the postage is charged to the customer, he has the feeling that they want to take his wallet away and cries out about publishers' theft. Let's not talk about editorial propaganda by means of essays that only sharks, that is, very often the least chosen, can sustain with the disastrous result of beating intelligent and honest publishers who try to restore prestige to the art of the book.

The booksellers were also remembered... Good devils who try everything to earn the most possible without risking much or even nothing.

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We talked about the public that cannot love reading because of the large percentage of... illiterate literates and because often the good book is kept away from the shop windows, as something clandestine or almost.

The popular public, the one that interests us most, either doesn't read at all or only reads the nonsense that is offered to them with circus or cinematic references.

The popular terrain is excellent, however. Our people are like the stone waiting for the impact of metal to spark. We saw it in the second phase of the war. From the working masses who formed the vast majority of the fighting army, everything could be obtained by appealing to the heart and intelligence.

The state and the ruling classes have scandalously betrayed the promises of the time. As long as danger threatened: dear people, heroic people, people destined for the greatest things! then the "dear people" was pushed into the arms of Bolshevik demagoguery.

Now much has been lost, but we could get back on track. The book would be a great ally. But who takes care of it? The Government, no; the bourgeoisie, with the exception of a few groups that spend without understanding anything, much less; the parties, even those that introduce the book among their electoral symbols, little and badly, that is, for partisan purposes.

In short, the general Italian public is what it is, and it works miracles with the prevailing mentality and habits of our semi-illiteracy - to spread a few good books.

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Above all, the cross has been shouted at the publishers, at those industrialists who know a lot and in such unfortunate times reserve for themselves a profit much greater than the presumed loss caused by the high cost of paper, by the high wages of the printers, by the postal rates and by the limited print runs in use among us for the reasons mentioned above.

Well, the truth must be told: there are publishers who, because they have common sense, made up of experience and foresight, get by quite well; but getting rich with a book made with just a little decency in our country is not possible.

With editorial fraud, yes. However, defrauding the public does not mean being a publisher.

We have talked about all these good and bad things, but no one is yet used to speaking properly about the quality of book production determined with equal responsibility by publishers and authors.

Yet looking a little more seriously at the quality of production could mean many good things and have a decisive influence on the diffusion of the book.

Just as there are too many men who cannot bring themselves to consider honesty the best cunning, so there are too many publishers who do not want to believe that the success of a book is in any case guaranteed only by its intrinsic value.

But who judges the goodness of a work?

Authors rarely succeed in imposing a self-critical function. Too many of them need, more than to give the public worthy works, to receive a little money from the publisher. Fight for life. Selection should be made by critics and by publishers: both have a function, so to speak, of education with respect to the public.

Critics are almost always clever little men, but for some time they have lost the habit of criticizing seriously. If you believe precisely what they write about many writers, you experience bitter disappointment. Then you end up distrusting everything and everyone. Exalted authors, if they do not deserve consideration, end up believing themselves to be very good and no longer make an effort to improve; and the inept ones who await their hour, measuring themselves by comparison and feeling themselves to be something more or equal to those who are launched, climb the ladder to success with the most surprising impudence. And they succeed at first in obtaining the ephemeral success that is enough to flatter their vanity, to increase



their distrust of criticism and to encourage the new vanities that throng the doors of publishing houses, to foment ever more shameless impudence.

Criticism in Italy no longer builds. It disintegrates, humiliates, discourages the elect, leads the good astray. If here and there some proud spirit brings it back to its true functions and fights with honesty and pride, open up, oh heavens! all against the heresiarch who insults, defames, debases for ulterior motives, perhaps out of envy, and worse...

There are several bibliographical journals that at first glance would leave one hoping for who knows what awakening in the art of criticism; but they are, for the most part, editorial bulletins with articles with forced rhymes in favor of the authors of the House or of the advertising houses, that is, articles paid a certain amount per line.

And then there is worse: the exchange of loving sentiments between critics who have been, those who are and others who will be authors: you are good, I am good; I am illustrious, you are most illustrious; you are an unsurpassed lyricist, I am an emulator of Leopardi, and so on.

Poor selection skills among the public, insufficient collaboration from the press: we should therefore have faith in the publishers, who, at least in their own interest, should print only excellent things.

But this is where the problem lies.

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Publishers with spirit and critical ability in Italy can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Therefore, the choice of works to be published happens as God wills and we know with what consequences.

The book chosen at random or published by virtue of recommendations, does not find its way, yes?! The publisher cannot tolerate warehouse funds; and so it must be placed at all costs.

Usually the book that costs the least - whether it is worth it or not - must be sold, even to the detriment of very valuable works.

We can cite cases of publishers who, in the scholastic field, have waged war on their own publications to replace them with others of much lesser value, for which, however, they had no commitments of percentages with the authors and other expenses.

On a work that costs little and that the publisher is keen to sell, discounts higher than the usual ones are willingly granted to the bookseller, so that the latter will be able to display in the shop windows and show off in the best possible way to customers the junk to the detriment of worthy and useful books.

Force publishers to be intelligent and honest? Force authors to be more self-critical? Force booksellers to renounce easy profits from editorial turpitude? Oh no: impossible!

So what remains is the public and the newspapers; in short, public opinion remains.

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We must create - if it is permissible to say so - a book conscience in the country; induce the generality of citizens to read more, to choose works regardless of the allure of covers or lower prices; restore good criticism in the daily newspapers, promote the diffusion of books even in the countryside (in our country there are no more than a thousand bookshops worthy of the name, and we are forty million souls!); authoritatively select the export of books abroad, confer on the bookseller that probity that can only come from sufficient culture; give birth everywhere to the passion for home libraries - books are read willingly only if they belong to us - and nourish popular libraries and those of every other kind, widely.

And then the Italian publishing industry will come out of its minority and the era of large print runs and book expansion will begin; the ignorant, narrow-

minded or stupidly business-minded publishers will change profession and the valuable writers will acquire that economic evaluation that today is barely the privilege of a few corruptors and just as many charlatans gleaning obscenities and exotic paradoxes.

And then perhaps there will be a government that will feel the duty to examine the problem of expensive paper, prohibitive postal rates and that will also want to study a form of protection for national literary production.

**Frank Ciarlantini**